



*The*

# **SILENCER**

**CORA ROSE**

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## BLURB

When a little harmless flirting at a biker bar suddenly takes a turn for the worse and I find myself at odds with the dangerous Fallen Aces gang, I call on the only man I know who can save me.

Anthony Costello may be a vicious mafia boss with a penchant for violence and torture, but he's also my best friend's father and the sexiest man I've ever laid eyes on. His buttoned-up demeanor and grumpy attitude only fuel my desire to take him apart. I live to push all his buttons. And though he says he's straight, it seems Anthony may have a soft spot and possessive streak for this smart-mouthed twink. Because as war between rival gangs escalates, things between Anthony and I start to heat up. And I think I'd rather like to sit on the king's lap to watch it all burn.

*The Unexpectedly Twisted series is a rom-com mafia spin-off of the Unexpected series. It contains dark themes and triggers, please see content warnings at the beginning of each book.*

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## TRIGGER WARNINGS

This book is a dark rom-com with these trigger warnings:  
Violence, physical assault, drugs, exhibitionism, bondage, kidnapping,  
detailed torture, dub-con and blood.

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# 1

TATUM

I probably shouldn't have come to this bar alone, but I wasn't thinking with my brain. No, I was thinking with my needy, hungry dick. And I never want to victim blame, but I am definitely blaming myself for being so fucking stupid. And I blame Brayden too. If my ex wasn't such a mindfuck, maybe I wouldn't have gone off the deep end and decided on a random hookup at this sketchy bar on the outskirts of town.

I force my gaze forward and look at myself in the bathroom mirror. My hair, which I dyed silver last week, is ruined, my perfectly coifed masterpiece sitting limply on my head. The skin around my right eye is turning black and blue, and the corner of my lip is cut, a few drops of blood staining my orange crop top. A sharp pain has started to throb in my skull, and I wonder if I've got a concussion. They got me in the ribs too, and it hurts to inhale.

Damn bigots.

Honestly, why do people care so much about who I fuck?

Assholes.

"You're so hot, but so very stupid. So fucking stupid," I say to myself, sniffling and wiping at my eyes. Honestly, it hurts to cry, so I swallow it back. I can do that later.

You know, if I'm still alive.

"What were you thinking coming here like this?" I murmur to myself. I stare at my sallow eyes in the mirror and swipe at the one not beat to hell.

Hm, maybe I'm not so hot after all. I look like a trampled pumpkin.

Fuck. I wasn't thinking when I set foot in this seedy bar. I came here on a whim, planning to meet up with someone I'd met online for a drink, just a casual hookup. I didn't realize that I'd offend the people in this dingy establishment just by existing. Being gay in their vicinity isn't something they tolerate, apparently. Flirting with the bartender was a terrible mistake.

Never again.

Never.

I sniffle and then hear a violent banging on the bathroom door. I'd locked it, wanting to hide until the danger passed. I should have tried to escape out the front, but two men were blocking the entrance, a feral gleam in their eyes. It seems they don't want to let me go.

I better not leave this bar in a body bag. I don't plan on dying today. Not for a long time, actually. I'm only twenty-one. I have a lot to live for, a whole hell of a lot.

Fumbling with my phone, I almost call my best friend, Ben, but then decide against it. I know he'd be here in a second, but I don't want to bother him. What if these men hurt him too? What if I put my best friend in danger? I can't do that. And knowing his boyfriends, Cash and Ford, if Ben ended up hurt, they'd murder me themselves.

My shaking fingers scroll up and come to Angel's name. I don't expect him to come to my aid. He's far too timid and sweet, but his father...

My mind conjures up images of notorious mobster, Anthony Costello, in his perfectly pressed suit, tattoos peeking out from the sleeves and collar, his styled hair always so perfectly combed, his dark eyes watching everything so intently.

Yeah, Angel's father would be a good option. Anthony is dangerous, a ferocity locked down so tight that I know he has evil inside of him just waiting to come to the surface.

He doesn't like me or my incessant flirting, but he'd help me if Angel asked him to.

He'd help me for the sake of his son.

Even if I bug the shit out of him.

Hesitating only a moment, I hit the call button just as the banging on the door intensifies. My heart races, and I feel it pounding in my throat and

skull. It hurts, it fucking stings, so I close my eyes and breathe slowly through my nose.

I can do this. I will survive this.

The phone rings only twice before Angel picks up.

“Hi, Tatum!” Angel says sweetly, and just the sound of his voice makes my eyes burn.

“Hi,” I reply, my voice cracking. “I was...um, Angel, can you get your dad on the phone? It’s a bit of an emergency.”

I know he can hear the shouting in the background, the pounding on the flimsy wooden door. It’s cracking slowly but surely. I’m not exaggerating when I say I need help.

“Tatum, are you okay?” he asks. I can hear him panting slightly as he runs.

“I’m...no. I’m in some trouble. Did something stupid...”

I let out a choked sob and then a shaky breath. Angel fumbles with the phone, and I can hear the panic laced in his words. “Don’t worry. We’ll... Dad!” His voice is loud and urgent, and for a moment, I’m so fucking thankful I have him as a friend. It was just a chance meeting a year ago, in a coffee shop near school, and yet here I am, able to turn to him in a time of need.

“Dad, Tatum is in trouble.”

I hear a pause and then a muffled deep voice, “Tell him I’m on my way.”

Relief pulses through me as I press my back against the wall, willing him to show up as quickly as possible. The jeers and shouts on the other side of the door are making me want to throw up. They hate me. They hate who I am.

God, don’t let them get in.

Don’t let them break down the door. I don’t know how much more my body can take. I’m not made of sterner stuff. I can’t defend myself. Don’t even know where to start.

Perhaps, if I make it out of this alive, I can take classes so I can protect myself. Self-defense classes—something to make me stronger and braver in these kinds of situations.

I hear the pounding on the door intensify, and I realize they must be kicking it down. Anthony won’t make it here in time.

"Hang in there, Tatum," Angel says. "My dad will be there soon. He's calling you right now. Answer."

How does he even know where I am?

And even if he does for some weird reason, he's too far away. *I* don't even know the address of where I am. Some biker bar in the hills.

Why the hell didn't I tell the dude to meet me at a small restaurant downtown? Somewhere safe. Fucker didn't even show. He probably took one look at this place and drove away.

I let out a choked sob as my phone beeps, and I see a number I don't recognize flash across the screen. It must be him. The man I tease and taunt on purpose, the man who I totally annoy, and yet still, he's coming for me.

"Tatum," he says lowly when I answer. His voice is almost a growl. Under any other circumstances, his stern, gruff voice would give me a boner. I'd honestly jack off while listening to him lecture me, but right now, I'm too frightened. I can't even think about getting hard.

"Hi," I whisper and then let out a small sob. "I'm in trouble."

"I know. Stay calm. Protect your head if they get to you. We'll be there soon."

Not soon enough. But I just nod, realizing he can't hear me but staying silent anyways.

"I'm scared," I say softly, and Anthony blows out a breath.

"I know you are, but Tatum, listen to me. Anyone who touches you will pay. Every one of them."

Shivers run up my body, breaking across my skin. "Please don't let them hurt me."

And at those words, the door breaks off the hinges, and my phone slips from my hand and drops to the ground.

Three large men appear through the broken and gaping wood, and I press against the wall behind me. I can feel the cool cement against my lower back as I realize that there's nowhere to go. I'm trapped.

Shit. Shit.

*Protect your head.*

"Come on, guys. It was just some harmless flirting," I say, hating that my voice is shaking but trying to lighten the mood. It doesn't work. It only seems to make them angrier. They advance on me, and just as the first fist lands on my face, I hear bigoted words pollute the air around me before I fall to the ground.

My arms wrap around my head, trying like hell to keep it safe as the first kick lands on my side. Pain screams through my ribs, and I gasp, a groan leaving my lips.

Fuck, this hurts. It fucking hurts.

“Please,” I beg, but they don’t listen, of course they don’t listen. These men don’t think with their brains, they don’t pay attention to reason. They just operate out of hate.

Another kick comes with a loud shout, pain shooting up my abdomen, my breath leaving me in a painful cry.

And then the next kick lands on my hands and everything goes black.

---

I wake up to the sound of gunfire and shouts. My world is spinning, tilting. Everything smells. Smoke, sweat, blood.

And then I’m in strong, capable arms, cradled to a chest that feels familiar, a scent enveloping my senses as I’m carried out of my own personal hell. I come and go from consciousness, in fits, my eyelids fluttering open only to shut again.

Everything hurts.

Pain.

Aches.

I don’t want to wake up if this is what waking feels like.

“Tatum,” a soft voice says in my ear, and I sigh, knowing who it is.

Angel. My angel who saved me.

“Tatum,” the voice says, gruffer. Angry.

Wait, no. Not Angel. It’s Anthony.

Yes, him. That’s who’s here, cradling me in his lap as we’re driven away from the shady bar. I feel the bumps in the road as I nuzzle into him, my brain seeping in and out of awareness.

“You’re okay. You’re going to be okay,” the voice reassures me.

I don’t know if I will. I don’t know...

I pass out once more, only to wake up in a bedroom, cool sheets against my skin. For a moment, I can’t figure out where I am, but slowly my brain pieces it together, snapshots and sounds, smells that are wholly familiar.

I’m in his house. Anthony’s house.

With him.

A beeping resonates through the room, and I realize that I'm hooked up to a monitor, an IV in my arm.

Fuck, this is worse than I thought.

Those assholes.

I groan and try to move, but pain slices up my side, and I gasp.

I don't know why I'm surprised at the sensation. This is what it always feels like, throbbing, aching pain that seeps into your bones and refuses to budge. I've been beat up a few times in the past, by school bullies who didn't like how I acted or how I dressed. Guys who were scared of me, of how different I am. But it's never been this bad.

This was a beating with the intent to kill.

Another groan, and I wince at the pain lancing through my jaw.

"Oh, fuck me," I whisper as my eyelids flicker open.

It's blurry for a second before I see the outline of someone in the shadows. As my vision clears, I see that it's him. Anthony. He's sitting in a wingback chair, his legs spread out before him. He's dressed like he always is—black slacks, a white button-up shirt, sleeves rolled up his forearms. Only this time, even with the shadows hiding most of him from me, I can see that he's a little more rumpled than normal.

His hair is mussed, the top buttons of his shirt loose, exposing some of his tattooed chest to me, and he's not wearing any shoes.

He's bare-footed.

He looks tired, but he's still way hotter than any middle-aged man has any right to be.

A clink brings my gaze down to a glass in his hand. He's drinking something, something that almost glows in the dim lamplight.

Whiskey.

If this were any other time, I'd crack a joke about how he should stop trying to turn me on. But I can't speak.

I can't get anything out. My throat is sore, and it hurts to breathe.

"Don't. Don't try to speak," Anthony's voice is low and soft as I stare over at him. "You need to rest."

But I can't, not with how my body hurts.

A tear slips from my eye, and I swipe at it, wincing when my fingers graze over a cut on my cheek.

Another clink of the ice, a swallow from across the room, and then the patter of footsteps as they make their way over to me.

I peer up and see Anthony looming over me, his brow furrowed, his dark eyes narrowing.

“The doctor said you’d be okay with rest. Nothing’s broken, just bruises.”

I nod and feel another tear slip from my eye. A soft brush of his thumb steals it away, and I sigh. Everything hurts, but that. His touch. It feels good.

It feels right.

“Thank you.”

It’s all I can say, a low rasp of words and feelings, desperate and needy.

He doesn’t answer, and I can’t cope with the thought of him angry that I inconvenienced him. That perhaps he wishes he hadn’t gotten involved. I’m usually loud and confident, full of snark and purpose, but right now, I’m reduced to a crying, sniveling mess.

I don’t want him to see me like this, to see me at my weakest. So I shut him out, closing my eyes and letting my mind drift. I will come out of this stronger, fiercer—but right now, I’m going to just let myself be. I’m going to let myself hurt.

I’ll remember this.

And I’ll be stronger because of it.

## 2

ANTHONY

I take the steps down to the basement without a backward glance. The door to the shed above ground closes with a bang, and I hear the click of the lock from the outside.

Good. Shut me in.

No one should come down here. Unless they've been invited.

And the only ones who are down here now have been summoned and escorted.

Against their will.

No one would come to hell for fun.

And no one ever comes out alive.

I hear their screams and pleas as soon as I enter the labyrinth of tunnels that I carved out under the back yard of my property over twenty years ago. I make my way to the right as lights flicker overhead, and I pick up the pace.

This is the land of the dead. I keep their bodies here, buried deep within the earth—entombed in the catacombs.

Another scream causes goosebumps to explode across my skin.

Yes. They should feel it.

They should feel everything.

I want them alive as long as possible. Days. Weeks even.

I want them to regret ever touching him, ever trying to snuff out his light.

The way he looked curled up on the ground of that bathroom, the welts on his skin, the bruises. The way he bled. The way his tears slipped from his eyes, how he reached for me when I finally arrived. How he called out for me while he slept...

I'm going to make them bleed for every kick, every punch, every hateful slur.

I finally see the open doorway and make my way inside. My fingers grab the gloves in my suit jacket pocket, and I put them on. They squeak as my fingers flex, my legs carrying me toward the tray of knives that Bane has set out for me.

"Time to take you apart," I say lowly as I stand in front of the three bloody men all tied up in a row.

The men who hurt him.

"Please," one starts to say, but I don't want his words. I don't want to hear him speak.

There's a reason I'm called The Silencer.

I nod to Bane and the other man standing guard, and then reach toward the prisoner, pulling his mouth open as he grunts and drools.

"First your tongue," I say as I grab the knife and bring it up to his lips.  
"And then every other piece of you."

His screams make it worthwhile.

A small atonement for his crimes.

And yet, it's not enough.

No, there will be more. Much more. I think of every hour I've spent at his bedside. Every hour that he's been in agony, and I've been unable to help him. Every rasped breath and pained moan. I think of it all and know that even this may not satisfy me. For every day the boy is hurting, for every bruise on his body, these prisoners will suffer. And only when I'm satisfied will I let them die.

*Only then*, I think as the knife carves into muscle.

Only then.

# 3

TATUM

“Oh good, you’re awake,” a soft voice says as my eyelids flutter open. I see Angel hovering next to me, his sweet smile greeting me as I come into consciousness. Like an angelic being come to visit me, shining bright.

“Hi,” he breathes, his hand grasping onto mine gently.

“Hey,” I murmur, and he grabs a cup off the table and helps me take a sip of water. It wets my parched mouth, and I feel the relief of it almost immediately.

“Better?” he asks, and I nod. I still ache, but the medication that they’re surely pumping into me is helping lessen the pain. It makes me feel more like myself. Though I’ll feel more like myself once I’m out of this bed and moving around again.

I usually have endless chaotic energy.

An energy that is being stifled and restrained at the moment.

“Yeah,” I say and sigh, squeezing his hand. “Thank you for saving me. Thought I was a goner there for a second.”

He nods, swallowing, his blue eyes wet. His blond hair, almost as light as mine, covers his head like a halo. In the sunlight that’s shimmering through the cracks of the blinds, he positively glows.

He’s nothing like his father—the man who simmers in the shadows.

Angel takes after his mother, a beautiful woman who I've been told died years ago from cancer. I've seen pictures of her in the study, and I can see why Anthony went for her. She was truly an angel. Her smile was luminous and she looked like the definition of sweet. Like a flower blooming in a garden on thorns.

"I mean, I didn't do much. It was all my dad."

I nod and glance at the empty chair in the corner, wondering if Anthony has sat there again, watching over me while I slept.

I doubt it.

I know that I've been nothing but a pest to him over the past several months, poking at him, pushing all his buttons. I know that he's a dangerous man, but I don't care about any of that. It's never deterred me. To me, he's just a man. A hot one.

One that I have a major crush on.

Even though I know he'll never reciprocate those feelings.

He's a straight mob boss with twin sons that are my age. Angel and Diablo.

*Diablo*, I think with fondness. That little shit.

He's just as crazy and unhinged as his name suggests—from the saws he carries around with him to the evil gleam in his dark eyes.

"I'm so glad you're okay," Angel says, sniffling. His words pull me back to the present, and I manage a small smile.

"I'm fine. This is the worst I've had it, but I'll make it through. I'm a survivor."

"Yes. You are."

"I have many more men to meet. I'm in my prime, Angel. My prime. I can't die yet. My last fuck cannot be Brayden. I refuse to let it be him."

His blue gaze meets mine, and he wipes at his eyes. Such a sweet soul. So pure. I don't know how he managed to be this way when his father is so filled with darkness, a darkness that even I can't touch.

It's bone-deep, a part of him. It feels like if I reached out and skirted my hand along it I'd be sucked in.

Oh god, I wouldn't mind that at all.

"You are. You weren't ready to go. Not yet."

"Nope."

"Brayden has been calling, you know?"

"Has he?" I ask, my heart speeding up.

“My dad saw your phone, kept asking who that was.”

“Did you tell him?”

“No, of course not. I didn’t want Brayden to end up with missing fingernails or even a dick.”

We stare at each other, and my lips twitch into a small smile. Angel isn’t returning the gesture though. His bottom lip is pulled between his teeth.

“What?” I ask. “What’s wrong? You know, besides my face.”

He shakes his head, some of his hair falling onto his forehead. “My dad is...he’s so mad.”

“At me?” I ask, feeling my stomach churn in anxiety. Fuck, I don’t want him mad at me. I know I was an idiot for going to that bar, but honestly, I learned my lesson. I’ll never do it again. I’m not that much of a stupid fuck to go somewhere I know I’m not wanted, especially not back to a place with men who look like they belong in a biker gang.

“No, of course not. He’s mad at those guys who attacked you.” He glances away. “It’s—”

His voice trails off and he shakes his head once more. He pushes the hair on his forehead back and sighs. “Never mind. It doesn’t matter.”

“It does, please tell me.”

“No, you’re recovering. You don’t need to worry.”

“I mean, I’ll worry if you don’t tell me.”

Angel eyes me, his gaze slightly drawn. “He’s just...been very busy in those sheds of his.”

“Sheds?”

He nods and then turns his gaze away. “It’s not important. I’ve said more than I should have.”

I realize I won’t be able to pry any more information from him. As sweet as he is, he’s stubborn. Something I figure he gets from his father. But, knowing me, I’ll figure it out eventually. When I’m feeling a little better. I’ll have to wait. Not that patience is my best quality. Actually, it’s not a quality I possess.

“You sure you don’t want to tell me?” I ask, trying my luck once more, and Angel purses his lips.

“Yes, I’m sure. You just focus on yourself. That’s all you need to do.”

I sigh and then rub at my sore ribs gently. I glance around the ornate bedroom, the off-white walls, the blue and purple abstract paintings, the

marble floors that span the entire space. As nice as this place is, this isn't where I'm meant to be. I have a life outside of here.

"I really need to get home."

Angel's blue eyes widen. "Oh no. You can't go yet. My dad wants you here."

"But I have classes, work...my roommates..."

Angel shakes his head determinedly. "We've taken care of it. Your roommates think you've moved out, and we've contacted your professors. What's more important is that you recover. Right now, we need you safe. Here. With us."

I don't understand that. Why the hell would I need to be kept safe? But then again, who knows what Anthony did when he came for me. I have no fucking clue. All I know is I heard gunshots. And screams.

Oh shit.

Oh, fucking shit.

The sheds.

"How many people died?" I rasp, my throat closing up slightly. Angel glances away from me once more and stares out the open window that overlooks the expansive gardens.

"That doesn't matter."

It does. It matters. People are no longer alive because of me. Not that they didn't deserve it. But still. I've never been the one at fault.

"Come on, Angel. Tell me."

"I can't. And I won't. It doesn't help. Knowing never helps."

I sigh and rub once more at my tender body, the places where their boots kicked with a hatred I didn't know existed.

"Okay. For now, it's okay. I'll let it drop."

He nods, his lips curling up at the corners. "Thank god. I didn't want to have to be rude."

I huff a laugh, wincing when I feel pain lance up my side once more.

Goddamn, my ribs have to be broken. I don't care what Anthony said before. They hurt like a motherfucker.

"I know it hurts, but I promise they're not broken. The doc was very thorough," Angel says, reading my mind.

"Yeah, okay. Whatever you say."

"Doc is never wrong. He's been doing this a long time."

"I dunno, from what I remember, he looked kinda young to me."

“He is. Young, I mean, but he’s been working on people since he was like twelve. Been doing this a long time. He knows his stuff. He’s a bit of a genius.”

I nod and then lean my head back. The bed I’m lying in is fancy, with an adjustable head. So currently, I’m sitting upright.

So damn convenient.

I need to eventually go home, but when I do, I’m gonna miss this place. I’ve never lived somewhere so nice.

“Want to watch a movie with me?” Angel asks. “I thought you’d have a hard time sitting still and this may help distract you.”

“Yeah, let’s do that.”

He climbs into bed with me, careful of the wires connected to my chest and arms and leans his head on my shoulder. He’s warm and smells like honey.

“So glad you’re okay. Really, Tatum. I was so worried when you didn’t wake up right away.”

“Me too. I’ve never been hurt like this.”

He meets my gaze and presses a tender kiss to my cheek. “You just focus on getting better. That’s all you need to do. We’ll take care of the rest.”

I feel him shift closer to me, and I watch as he turns the TV on.

“How about something really sappy and romantic?” he asks, and despite wanting to roll my eyes, it would hurt too much.

I don’t do romance, don’t quite like it. But I know that Angel does, that he dreams of marrying someone one day, of being loved above all else.

Me, not so much.

I’d settle for unhinged sex against a wall and a quiet escape afterward.

Yeah, romance is not for me.

---

“Hm, well, Tatum, you seem to be healing really well,” Doc says, his stethoscope perched around his broad shoulders. Like I told Angel yesterday, he’s younger than I expected a mafia doctor to be. Maybe early forties, with a sleek suit and glasses perched on his nose. He could have easily walked off a modeling catalogue.

“Thanks, Doc. Seems to be all your doing,” I say with a small, slightly flirtatious smile.

His eyes flash to mine, and I wink at him. Well, I try to. I don’t know if I succeed. My right eye is still bruised and half shut, the other is okay though. At least half my face looks alright.

I glance the other way and see that Anthony is perched in his chair again, looking murderous. He always looks that way, I guess.

It does things to my libido.

It seems I have a thing for dangerous men.

I look lower and see that his white sleeves are stained red, and I feel my dick jump in my sweatpants.

Seems my libido is very on board with whatever that means.

And it’s really not my fault. He’s sitting there, his thighs spread in those neatly pressed slacks, a tumbler of some kind of liquid in his hand. He looks like sex personified, all dark and angry. I wonder if he fucks like he looks. It would be rough and brutal. My ass would surely take a beating, and I would be so here for it.

My heart rate picks up as I think about it—me, ass up on his bed, just waiting for him to fuck me.

The beeping on the machine ratchets up as my mind wanders, and I feel my cheeks heat in recognition.

Doc glances at me, catching where my gaze is, and his lips twitch.

With a quick flick of his wrist, he wrenches the cords off of my chest, making me flinch from the suddenness of it.

“Hm, well, we don’t need these anymore. You’re doing well enough to be without them.”

My gaze moves up to Doc, and I sigh. “Thanks. I feel so much better.”

“Of course you do. I’m a miracle worker. It’s why I’m paid the big bucks,” he winks down at me with a small smile, but the grunt from Anthony has him straightening. “Now, my suggestion would be to get up as often as you can and move around. Even if it’s just a little walk down the hallway, do it. If you can tolerate the pain, you should try and get up as much as possible. It’s never good to sit for too long.”

“Oh yes! I can help with that,” Angel interjects as he floats into the room. He’s wearing flowy satin pants and a button-up shirt. He looks like a flower child born in a different generation. “We can take walks in the garden. It’s beautiful this time of year.”

Anthony's eyes narrow as he glances at his son. "With protection you can. And you'll stick to the gardens only, Angelo. No wandering off."

Angel pauses and cocks his head in confusion. "Of course, Dad. You don't need to full-name me. I'm always careful. You know that."

Anthony's hands clench the arms of the chair, and he nods, pushing himself upright and fiddling with the cuffs of his shirt.

"I'll assign Casey to you both."

Angel huffs a small laugh and then walks over to his dad, pulling him into a hug. I can see the reluctance in Anthony for just a second before he wraps his arms around his son.

"I want nothing but for you both to be safe," he says softly, his eyes moving up to meet mine. A challenge, I suppose.

I do love those.

"We will. I promise. I'll take good care of him," Angel says.

I just watch the transaction unfold, the love they both have for each other. When Angel moves toward my bed and wiggles his way inside, I see Anthony's eyes shutter, any emotion he's feeling suddenly shut off. What's left is a blank slate.

"I'll leave you both to it," he says with a curt nod.

He moves past us, his gaze settled on me for just a moment, and then he's gone.

"Well, he seemed upset," Angel says as he snuggles into me, his head resting on my shoulder, a position we've grown quite used to. "He's been in a mood though."

My heart rate increases. "Probably because I'm here."

"No, that's not it. He just seems stressed. Which is weird. I don't remember when my dad has ever let himself show that kind of emotion."

I purse my lips, fiddling with the edge of my blanket. I want to tell him that it really is me, I'm the problem, but before I can, Angel sniffs and then sits up, rubbing at his mouth. "Can I be rude for just a second? Like, just this once?"

My eyebrows rise at that. "Sure."

"You need a shower, babe."

I huff a laugh and lift my arm, smelling my pits. "Yeah, I think I do. It's been a couple days."

"I mean, you were indisposed with some pretty bad injuries, but yeah, let's get you washed up."

He shifts off the bed and helps me stand, his lean body pressed into mine as he leads me to the en suite bathroom. Just this small walk has me breathing like I've run a mile.

Fuck, I've never been one for athletics, but I'm usually pretty active. Especially in the bedroom. At this rate, I won't be able to fuck at all.

I'd just have to lie there and take it. Like a pillow princess.

I huff in partial annoyance at the thought just as Angel turns the faucet on. The water runs into the large two-person ceramic tub, and I watch as he adds some essential oils and a bath bomb.

"This should help with the healing," he says and then moves toward me, his deft fingers helping me undress.

It's so sweet, so platonic. I don't even get hard from it, and Angel doesn't seem bothered either. It's almost like he's my brother.

If I had a brother, I'd choose someone just like him.

"Oh gosh, those bruises look brutal," Angel says, his fingers trailing over the black and blue spots on my ribs.

"Yeah, they don't feel that great either."

"Agatha has some cream for these. She's making you a batch."

"Yeah?" I ask, my mind conjuring up the woman who runs the kitchen. She's always been so kind to me and makes me a mean French pastry every time I show up.

"Yeah, I know when my dad told her what happened, she said she'd get on making a batch right away. It really is amazing stuff."

I eye him. "How do you know it's amazing? I can't imagine you ever being hurt."

"Oh, I've never used it. My dad has though. He boxes sometimes."

I envision Anthony in a ring, sweat dripping down his powerful body and feel my dick start to chub up. Well, hell. At this rate, I'll be hard for all eternity.

Angel's hand leaves my side, and he helps me get into the tub. The water is hot, but not so much so that it hurts. As soon as I sink down into it, I feel the relief of the heat on my sensitive, aching skin.

"This is nice," I wheeze as I lean back and take a moment to appreciate my surroundings. The bathroom is elegant, like all parts of Anthony's mansion. I shouldn't have expected anything less. Marble floors, a small chandelier hanging overhead, orchids perched on the windowsill. A small haven for his guests.

“Yes, it is. And you’ll smell much better.”

“You keep saying that, Angel, and I’ll get a complex,” I reply with a small laugh.

He giggles in response as he grabs two glass bottles and settles near the end of the tub. “You know you’re a hottie. Even with the black eye. You just look a little...oily.”

“Oh, fuck off.”

“But even oily, you look like a rock star. A sweaty one.”

“I better look like a fucking rock star,” I grumble as he helps me lean my head back against the cool ceramic.

“Stop being so snarky and let me wash your hair.”

“Fine, wash away.”

He sighs and then gets to work, his fingers working the suds into my scalp. I already feel more human.

“After this,” Angel says, nearly humming, “Want to go for a walk?”

“With that hottie bodyguard, Casey?”

“Yeah,” Angel says with a small laugh.

“I’m down,” I say. “Gotta get my six-pack back.”

“You’ve only ever had a six-pack in your dreams.”

I scoff and turn my head slightly to glower at him. It hurts to do so, but I still manage to make eye contact.

“You’re a real brat when you want to be, you know that?” I say, and Angel grins at me.

“I mean, I have to be a little bratty. My twin is Diablo.”

“True,” I say and then settle back against the tub. “But anyways, I need to at least get some of my definition back. At least my two-pack.”

“Sounds reasonable.”

“It is.”

We chat about nothing, silly small-talk as he rinses my hair and then conditions it, his fingernails dragging against my scalp. *Damn, that feels nice*, I think as I let him pamper me. When it’s time to get out of the lukewarm water, he wraps a towel around me and helps me dry off.

“So, what am I gonna wear?” I ask when the towel is tucked around my waist.

“So, my dad went to your place to grab clothes last night, so we have your stuff in the dresser. Let me get you some.”

The thought of Anthony in my space makes a shiver erupt through me. Well, damn. I hope he didn't see any of my sex toys or my dirty clothes. Actually, I kind of hope he saw my toys. Maybe it would make him think of me in a different light. Although, the dirty clothes might make him wince. I have a hamper, but rarely use it. And I'm pretty sure I had some dirty underwear hanging off my bedside-table lamp.

Angel reappears with a pair of bright blue sweatpants, a white t-shirt, and a pair of boxer briefs.

"Here you go. Do you need help changing?"

I shake my head and wince with the movement. "Nope. I can manage."

"Awesome," he says and then takes a step closer to me, giving me a good sniff. "And you smell much better."

"Fuck off," I say with a small laugh as he turns to leave.

When the door clicks shut, I pull on my clothes, checking my face out in the mirror. My eye is still badly swollen, and I have a healing cut near my lip, but other than that, the damage isn't that bad. My body on the other hand...

I pull up my shirt and see the bruises blooming across my skin. Black, blue, yellow. A nice color combination, but really, not a good look.

They'll heal.

My mind, however, might take a bit longer.

But then again, I do have the ability to get through trauma with humor. It's dark and twisted, but it helps me cope.

When I step out of the bathroom, Angel is waiting for me on the bed, his eyes on his phone, his thumb scrolling across the screen. He glances up, and his blue eyes meet mine.

"Oh, you look nice."

"I look like death, Angel. You don't need to lie."

"I'm not lying. You do look good. Much better than when you were in that bed."

I huff a small laugh and stride toward him, my legs wobbling slightly beneath me.

"I'm gonna have to take it slow."

"We can go as slow as you want. You ready?" he asks, and I nod, linking my arm through his.

We make our way down the long hallway, our footsteps sounding off the walls. This is a space I've traversed often to get to Angel's bedroom. And I

may even know where Anthony's bedroom is. I had to snoop to find out.

It's the one at the far end, with the double doors. There is a very small chance, I may have stood outside it once or twice, trying to hear him sleep.

Or jack off.

Or whatever he does behind those doors.

But I heard nothing.

That man is elusive. Even when I seek him out, I can't find him.

He must have secret passageways around here. Oh god, I'd love to find one of those.

Talk about sexy.

"We have to get Casey first," Angel reminds me as we take the stairs slowly down to the first floor. I glance to my right and see a few paintings on the walls, abstract and colorful. I've seen them many times, the house seems to be covered in them, but I never thought to ask about them.

"Who painted these?" I ask, and Angel's eyes soften even more.

"My mom. She loved to paint."

"Oh," I say, stopping and looking up at the yellow and blue and green splashed across the canvas.

"I don't think she was any good," Angel says in a whisper. "But my dad refused to let her believe she was anything but genius." I grin at him and his eyes sparkle. "He did love her, so much."

"I can see that."

"They really are shit, though."

I let out a loud laugh and then gasp, holding onto my ribs.

"God, Angel. Stop making me laugh."

He nods and crosses his hand over his heart. "I promise to stop being funny immediately."

I roll my eyes at him as we continue forward. When we get to the bottom of the stairs, I see Anthony's office to the right. The doors are shut and most likely locked.

I've tried to snoop and have been unsuccessful.

Sadly.

I've tried, several times to no avail.

"Don't even think about it, Tatum," Angel warns when he sees where my eyes are stuck.

"I can't help it. It's so intriguing."

Angel tugs me into the kitchen. It's there that we find Casey, eating a cookie while Agatha is bustling around, cooking and baking nonstop. Honestly, this woman is amazing. Not only is she here, working from dawn until dusk, but whenever I visit, she always has special treats waiting for me.

She's a gem and must be protected at all costs.

"Oh, Tatum," Agatha says with a wide smile, reaching out toward me and placing a Paine Suisse in my hand. "I'm so glad you're up and about."

"Me too."

She pulls me into a gentle hug and pats my back.

"I'm sure Angel told you, but I have an ointment for you to put on your bruises. It'll help them heal much quicker."

I nod and take a bite of the croissant. "Yeah, he told me, and oh god, Aggie. You gorgeous creature. This is delicious. Your talents are wasted here. You should come move in with me. I'll pay you in smiles and love."

She beams at me and then swats at me. "You keep those words to yourself, young man. Don't make me go complaining to Mr. Costello about you trying to poach me."

"You'd never," I say back, already feeling more like myself the longer I'm up and about. Being bedridden is not for me. My mind can't cope with it.

"Casey, we're ready to go out into the gardens when you are," Angel says, leaning into him and snapping a quick bite of his cookie. Casey eyeballs him and then sighs, feeding him the rest of it.

"If you weren't so cute, I'd murder you for that," Casey says and then stands up, swiping another cookie from the plate and walking to the large French doors and pushing them open. His long legs step outside, and I can't help my gaze taking in his tall, lithe form for a little appreciation before moving to the greenery all around us.

Anthony's mansion sits on several acres and abuts a literal forest. I'd asked about security on the premises when first arriving months ago, and apparently, from what Angel's told me, Anthony has spared no expense. There are electric fences surrounding his property, guards at all entrances, and cameras everywhere.

We're always being watched.

And yes, I've debated jacking off in full view of one of those cameras just to see what happens. Not that I've had a chance to do that.

“Alright, right this way,” Casey says around another mouthful of cookie.

We trail after him, our arms linked once more. I glance over at Angel and swipe a cookie crumb from the corner of his pink lips.

“Oh shoot, did I have something lingering there?” he asks with a slight blush.

“Just a crumb. You still looked cute with it, though.”

He sighs and then rubs at his face. “It doesn’t matter. No one’s here to see me anyways. I could have a cookie head and it wouldn’t matter.”

“I mean, a cookie head would be amazing. Everyone would want a bite.”

He giggles and nods. “They would. Maybe then someone would want to eat my face.”

I nudge him and then wince when I hit him with my bruised side. I need to remember that I’m still sore. This could have been so much worse. I could be completely bedridden, or brain dead.

“Be careful with yourself. My dad will be so upset if you get hurt again.”

“Angel,” I begin with a sigh. “Your dad doesn’t even notice I’m alive most of the time.”

My friend side-eyes me and then flicks at my nose. “You are so cluelessly adorable.”

I don’t know what that means, and don’t have a chance to ask when Angel gasps and skips off, leaving me behind. “Oh my god, they’re in bloom, Tatum!”

He cups some kind of lily in his hand like a princess and leans down, inhaling it. When he stands up and turns toward me, his nose is yellow.

I gesture to my face, but he just ignores me, frolicking over to the next plant.

“Casey! They’re in bloom! Look at them! I need sheers. I’m going to make a bouquet.”

Casey pulls the radio from his jacket and says something into it before turning toward me and shrugging.

I shrug back and make my way to a small stone bench and lower my sore ass onto it. One of those dickheads got me right in the ass cheek. And I’m no newb to a sore ass. Just usually, it’s more enjoyable than that night.

I watch as Angel prances from one flower to the next, and I can't help the small smile that pulls my lips up. He's told me how important this space is. This garden was his mother's, her pride and joy. When she died, Anthony preserved it to keep her memory alive.

Angel keeps her memory alive by helping maintain it.

I could do this too. *The Secret Garden* was one of my favorite books growing up.

If this was my space, I'd add to it. I'd make it even more colorful. I'd have a space built with a secret door and a swing. I'd make it positively magical.

But then again, no one asked me for my opinion. This isn't my space. This is Angel's and his mother's, and I won't overstep.

Normally, I'm fine with blurting shit out, but not this time. This place is almost sacred. Any changes to it would be met with disapproval.

A moment later, an older man appears with garden sheers and a wooden basket. I've never seen him before, but he could be one of the gardeners. I'm sure that Anthony has a few staffed full-time to take care of the expansive property.

"Here you go," the man says to Casey before turning around and disappearing from view.

"Oh my god! Look at this one, Tatum!" Angel says with a grin a few minutes later, reappearing from between two large bushes. He holds out a pink bushy flower to me. "It's a peony! I planted it last year and they bloomed. They're going to look so good in an arrangement."

I let out a small laugh. "You should do this for a living."

"If only," he says with a dreamy sigh and then moves away again, within sight but also far enough away. He's bending over, his hands gently pulling buds up for inspection and snipping some off. He's lost in his own world, a world of colors and scents. A world totally his own.

"We'll be a while," Casey says with a smirk. "That kid could be out here all day."

"Yeah," I say, standing up and stretching slightly. "Maybe I should go explore for a bit."

"Not too far," Casey says with a stern voice. "Don't want my fingers cut off if I lose track of you."

I snort at that bit of ridiculousness. "No one is losing fingers, dude."

“Someone would if you got hurt again. I happen to like my fingers. I’m very good with them.”

I snort at that. I don’t know what’s gotten into him, but he doesn’t look like he’s joking anymore.

“I’m serious, Tatum. No wandering out of view. Keep to the gardens. And for god’s sake, don’t even attempt to go near the sheds.”

I roll my eyes and nod. I was caught trying to go into one once.

Casey caught me and nearly wrung my neck.

I have an idea of what’s in those.

The idea of it should turn me off, but honestly, it just turns me on.

I’m so damn curious about this side of Anthony. I want to know every part of him. The one that he presents to me and Angel and then the one he keeps buried, the one he lets loose in the shadows.

It shouldn’t be hot, but for some reason, it really is.

My mother and father would be appalled if they found out about this. My mom would clutch her pearls and my dad would get red in the face. They’re both so naive in many ways. They adopted me when they were older, took me in as a foster child when I was a toddler and then made it legal when my mother finally gave up custody. It’s part of the reason I want to go into adoption. I know how beneficial it is for a kid to be in a stable and loving home.

“I’m just gonna try to get some steps in. Steps not anywhere near the sheds. I promise.”

Casey eyes me suspiciously, but I just grin at him and make my way around the hedges. It really is a beautiful property. He must spend thousands a month just to sustain it. I’m sure with all the illegal activities he’s involved in, he brings in plenty to afford it.

I glance over at Casey, who now has a hand on his gun, his gaze scanning between me and Angel. I really wish I had more freedom to explore further. I’ve only seen half of this property. There is so much more that I’ve yet to lay eyes on.

I’ve been fascinated with this place ever since Angel and I became friends. Usually, I just come over unexpectedly and we sit in his room, or in the conservatory with all the exotic plants that Anthony has had imported for his son. But when Angel finds himself predisposed with homework or a romance novel, I often wander around, peering in closed doors and sneaking around the property like the little shit I am.

Never have seen anything sinister though.

Much to my dismay.

Not that I'd like to see someone in pain, but knowing Anthony, they'd probably deserve it.

"Tatum. No farther, you little shit," Casey calls out.

I waggle my fingers at the bodyguard and then blow him a bratty kiss. I'm not looking for him to get his fingers cut off, but god, I'm really not that far away. And the grounds are sprawling. I want to wander just a little farther.

He rolls his eyes and then calls out, "You better behave."

"I always behave!"

His snort greets me, and I can't help but beam at him.

I may be bruised and feel a little broken, but goddamn, I could be in a worse situation. I could be alone in my lame apartment and not at this gorgeous mansion in these rolling hills.

"I'll tell Anthony," Casey warns, and I roll my eyes again.

He *should* tell Anthony. I'd like him to be a little worried for me. I mean, he did come for me, but it would be nice if he would kiss me all better.

*In your dreams, you delusional idiot.*

"Tell him! I dare you!" I shout back and then rub at my side when pain lances up it.

Casey's eyes narrow, his mouth pursed. And then he lifts his radio and calls something in. I sure as fuck hope he's calling sexy mafia man.

I wait with bated breath, my body thrumming in excitement until another man starts to make his way down the path, his lumbering form almost shielding the sun from view.

"Oh, fuck me," I murmur when Casey smirks over at me. This is so not Anthony.

I flip Casey off, and it's his turn to blow me a kiss.

The man comes to a stop near me and folds his arms across his wide, muscular chest. I eye him up and down as I rub at my chin.

"Hello, big man. I'm Tatum."

The man just stares at me behind his sunglasses. He's broad-shouldered with muscles nearly as big as me. He has a shaved head and a neatly trimmed beard, and he apparently doesn't feel the need to speak.

"Do you have a name?" I ask. He doesn't respond, just stares at me.

Well, this is no fun.

I sigh and then make my way back to where Angel is. I'll help him look for flowers. At least then I'll have something to distract me.

When I finally make it to him, my large shadow in tow, I bend down as much as I can and take a look at the small bouquet Angel has arranged in his wicker basket.

"Those look nice," I say, and Angel beams up at me.

"They're lovely."

He focuses back on the task at hand, and I'm left to just watch him. I guess it could be worse. "I could be dead," I mumble.

"You *could* be dead," Angel says and then sighs, glancing back up at me. "But I'm glad you're not. I'm glad you thought to call me."

I nod and then lower myself to the ground with a grunt. My ass continues to ache from the bruise and my ribs scream at me when I lean forward, but it could be worse. I could be a ghost.

Suddenly, Angel hops up, two purple flowers between his fingers.

"Hold that thought." He prances over to the bodyguards, slipping one behind each of their ears before making his way back to me.

I stare at both of them and grin. Casey looks ridiculous with that purple flower behind his ear, but that big guy looks even more so. And yet, neither do anything to remove them. Ha.

That's what they get. I hope they have to wear them the entire day.

"Anyways, I've said it before and I'll say it again. I'm so glad you're here. I've been lonely since Diablo moved in with Skylar."

"I bet. It must be hard having your twin so far away."

"It is. I miss him so much."

"Angel," I begin, and he cocks his head toward me. "Why is Diablo allowed to live off the property, but you're not."

He sighs. "Because Diablo can take care of himself. My dad doesn't think I can, doesn't think I have what it takes if someone comes after me. I'm too much like my mom."

"That's not fair."

"I know, but he's right. I don't have it in me. I'm too nice, and that'll get me hurt one day."

I nod and then reach over and fiddle with the petals of one of the white flowers peeking out of the basket.

"That's a tulip."

“Yeah, I know what a tulip is,” I say, and Angel huffs a small laugh.

“Sure you do. Anyways, I think my dad would like this bouquet, don’t you think?”

I eye it. I don’t see Anthony liking bright things, but then again, this is from his late wife’s garden, so what do I know?

“I think he will,” I lie. “Did your mom used to pick flowers for your dad?”

“Oh yeah, all the time. Our place was filled with them. Just vases and vases of them.”

I grin at the visual and lean back slightly. “Does he miss her?”

“I think so, but he’s used to being alone. My dad has lost a lot of people in his life. His parents, his grandparents. It’s why he’s so careful with me.”

“How did he lose them?”

“Just part of the business. Back then, things were more wild and unhinged. It was far more dangerous. My dad’s a lot smarter about how he runs his businesses and any illegal activities are thought through more carefully. He doesn’t want to end up like them.”

“Yeah, that makes sense.”

“Kind of. The mafia is a weird thing. It’s something you need to get used to,” Angel says and then peers off into the distance. “I see a few more flowers I want to grab. You sit here and keep watch over this.”

And then he’s off, moving toward some orange and red flowers. Casey follows Angel while the big man hovers over me.

“But really, Goliath, do you have a name?” I ask again, but the man doesn’t answer. Of course he doesn’t. He just looms like an ominous shadow.

I pull the rest of my croissant from my pocket and take a nibble. Chocolate and cream explode on my tongue, and I let out a low moan. God, Aggie outdid herself this time.

“You want some?” I offer, lifting my arm up, but the man stays quiet.

I sigh and continue to nibble on the pastry until it’s completely gone. Crumbs litter my shirt, and I wish I’d brought water with me. Or some milk.

Any liquid really.

I’ll just have to wait until I get back.

As soon as I think that, Angel makes his way toward me, a few more flowers in his hands.

Casey is hovering around him, a frown on his face.

“Casey, I’m fine. It’s just a bee sting,” Angel sighs.

“You could be allergic. You could die.”

“I’m not going to die. I’m *fine*.”

With a pained grunt, I move to stand, being helped in the process by the big man behind me. For the first time since he appeared, I’m glad for his presence. That made the whole thing of using my legs so much easier.

“I need to tell your father about this,” Casey says and Angel rolls his eyes.

“Fine, if you must. But I really am fine. That bee was just confused. It didn’t mean to hurt me.”

Casey rubs at his chin but doesn’t answer, just fiddles with the gun at his side. He’s probably debating shooting all the bees in the garden.

“I’m ready to head back if you are,” Angel says softly, the basket hanging off his arm. “I want to get these into water.”

“Yeah, I could go sit on a cushion for a bit. My ass cheek is throbbing.”

He nods and then leads me, arm in arm back toward the house. Even if I didn’t get to explore the grounds as much as I wanted to, I’m glad I got out of the house. No more lounging around in bed all day for me.

The more I’m up and about, the more I’ll feel like myself.

# 4

TATUM

“I heard you were being a shit out in the gardens today,” Anthony says, his voice low and dark. His presence is so unexpected that I startle, jolting upright and grunting at the pain that spears through me. I’m currently sitting downstairs on the porch, tucked underneath a fuzzy blanket and watching the ripple of water on the small pond in his back yard. I wonder if there are fish in there.

I bet there are expensive fish. Koi or sharks.

Bet he has a man on call to feed them and everything.

“Geez, Anthony,” I wheeze. “Give a guy a warning.”

He doesn’t respond, just continues to stand there, towering over me. He’s wearing his usual suit and tie, his jacket missing, and his sleeves rolled up his muscular forearms. I can see the tattoos and veins there.

Oh, good Lord.

Send help. He gets more attractive every hour.

His eyes swivel down to meet mine. “Well, I must admit you look very sexy this evening,” I say with a grin.

My smile widens and I try to hide the wince when my eye starts to throb.

“If you say so,” he replies.

Anthony’s gaze settles on me for just a moment before he turns it out to the landscape in front of us.

“You should be in bed.”

“I feel better when I’m not lying down. So I thought I’d sit for a while. You can join me, if you want.”

Anthony eyes me and then runs a hand across his jaw. The stubble abrades his palm and the sound of it scratching is the sound I want it to make when it rubs against my skin. Between my legs and ass cheeks.

“Actually, Agatha gave me some ointment that you should put on your bruises.”

I reach my hand out, palm up, and wait for him to place it in my grasp, but he doesn’t. He just shoves his hands in his pockets.

“I’ll put it on. I’ve seen the state of your back. You won’t be able to reach most of the bruises.”

“You really don’t need to do that. I can have Angel do it.”

The muscle in his jaw jumps.

“I’ll do it. Angel doesn’t know how to apply it.”

I eye him and then sigh, knowing I’m not winning this one. Problem is, if he’s gonna be rubbing that all over me, I’m going to get hard.

And if I get hard, I’m going to want to jack off.

God, it’s been a hot minute since I’ve come.

If I spurt all over Anthony, it will be his fault. I will blame him entirely.

“Fine. But I’m not ready to get up yet. I want to watch the sun set.”

Anthony doesn’t move from his spot hovering over me, and I make no move to get up. But I also hate the stilted silence between us. I want to make conversation, to fill this weird silence settling between us.

“Anthony, today Casey called another bodyguard to come help him...”

“Because you were being a little shit,” he says, and I grin up at him.

“I was just walking around and Casey got anxious. I behaved.”

“Hmm,” he says, and my balls tingle at his voice. He sounds disapproving and delicious.

“Anyways, what was his name? I’ve never seen him before. The big man with the shaved head and large biceps.”

The muscle in Anthony’s jaw jumps again. “Why?”

“Because I want to know.”

He doesn’t answer for a long minute. Finally, he bites out, “Teddy.”

“Teddy?” I ask, my eyebrows rising. “Well, that is not what I was expecting. Although, he is a bit like a teddy bear. A very muscly one.”

Anthony huffs and then turns his gaze out to the horizon.

“You’re not to flirt with the bodyguards.”

“Who said I was flirting?” I ask.

“Everyone.”

I snort at that and fiddle with the blanket around my legs.

“I’m just friendly. Those men are horny bastards to think I’m flirting.”

Anthony’s jaw pops again, and it takes all that’s within me not to lean over and lick him. Goddamn, he’s delectable.

“Stay away from the men in my employ. You’re not to fuck them.”

“Oh my god, Anthony. I’m not going to fuck them. I mean, they are tempting, all hot and big. They could lift me up and...”

Anthony shifts next to me, and my words trail off. “How about you come with me to my office and I get this applied. I have shit to do.”

“But the sunset,” I halfheartedly protest. I mean, he’s offering for me to go into his office, which I’ve been dying to do, so who am I to refuse?

“There will be one tomorrow.”

“I mean, I could be dead tomorrow. This could be the last one I see.”

“You’re not dying.”

I sigh, realizing I’ve lost this battle, and push myself upright. My body aches and twinges, but I try not to show it.

“Lead the way,” I say, wrapping the blanket around me and following after Anthony’s strong form. God, he has a nice butt. It flexes and moves in those custom-made slacks. I want to peel them apart at the seams and take a nice long look at his ass.

“Do you get your pants tailor-made?”

“Yes.”

“Probably spend a nice fortune on them, huh?”

“I guess it would seem like that to some, yes.” He unlocks the office door, the one I’ve hovered outside of so often and tried to open. The click of the lock resounds around us, and a moment later, it swings open.

“Right in here,” he says.

I stop and stare.

“What’s wrong?” he asks, his brow furrowed.

“Anthony, I don’t think you understand. I’ve been waiting to get a peek into your office for months. This is monumental. I need a moment to contain myself.”

“Get. Inside,” he growls, sounding impatient.

I roll my eyes at him and groan. “You have no idea what that voice does to me, Mister.”

He stares at me, long and hard, and I can do nothing more than do as he says. My feet carry me forward, my hard dick a compass leading me in the direction of the bookshelves.

This space is exactly what I thought it would be. Large mahogany bookcases wrap around the walls with paperbacks lining each shelf, a large black leather sofa sits in the middle of the room. A crystal chandelier, lowly lit, hangs above us. Two large immaculately clean windows overlook the grounds. And on the far right of the room is his sizable desk, a bulky leather chair behind it, and two sleek computers sitting atop it.

“Oh god, this is gorgeous,” I say as I make my way around the room. I want to know what kind of books reside here. Are they legal ones? Biographies? Romance? Oh god, I will die if there are gay romance novels on this shelf.

“Anthony, do you have any gay romance novels here? Any sexual awakenings, forced proximity? Oh my god, do you have any age gaps?” I ask, my fingers sliding across the spines of the books. I honestly didn’t think Anthony could get any sexier than this. And yet, here we are.

“I’m sure I do. I’m a father of two gay children.”

“You are,” I say, my eyes meeting his. Good fuck, he looks nice in the shadows like this. Like a monster ready to consume me.

*My, my, Anthony, what big teeth you have.*

“Come here,” he says, pointing to his desk.

I watch him for a moment, just taking it all in, before walking toward him. He’s unmoving, his stance slightly parted, a glass jar of ointment in his hands.

When I finally come to a stop before him, his eyes narrow.

“Undress,” he says.

“Good hell, Anthony, are you trying to make a gay boy’s dreams come true? Because you are. Like all my dreams are becoming reality. Right. Now.”

He sighs. “Take off your clothes, Tatum. This isn’t sexual.”

Oh, but to me, it is. This is ridiculously sexual.

“You have no idea how I can make this sexual. I have a very vivid imagination.”

Anthony unscrews the container, his eyes slashing toward me.  
“Undress, Tatum. I won’t ask again.”

“Well, Jesus. Fucking. Christ. Okay.”

I reach down to tug my shirt over my head and wince at the movement. Damn, my back hurts, my ribs. Truthfully, everything aches. The meds I was given only dim it slightly.

“Let me,” Anthony says, his fingers grazing my waist and making me shiver.

“I mean, fine, but this is getting ridiculous,” I mutter as he slowly peels my shirt off.

If I felt pain before, I don’t feel it anymore. It’s gone. All I feel is majorly hot and bothered.

He tosses my shirt onto his desk and then moves on to my sweatpants.

“Careful of my hard dick,” I warn, and Anthony’s movements stutter. He doesn’t say anything, seemingly unbothered, as he starts to carefully peel them off me. He sets them on the desk, but before he can reach for the glass jar, I blurt, “I also have a bruise on my ass. A really big one. Really. Big.”

His jaw ticks. “Is that so?”

“It’s very so.”

His nostrils flare when he reaches out and tugs my boxer briefs down my legs. A rush of air leaves my lungs. I can’t believe this is happening. I honestly can’t believe that Anthony is stripping me naked and soon, his hands will be all over me.

If I come like this, it will be all his fault. I am blameless.

“Whatever happens next is all on you, Mr. Mafia Man.”

Anthony huffs and then reaches for the glass jar once more. He twists the lid off with a flick of his wrist, and I bite back a moan at the sight. He could flick that wrist right across my dick. He could totally slap it, and I’d be begging for more.

I’d be totally into that.

His fingers dip into the white ointment and the smell of eucalyptus and lavender hits my nose.

“That looks like cum, but smells really strong,” I wheeze when his fingers gently rub at the bruise on my shoulder. His touch explodes through me like a wildfire. It rages. I can feel him everywhere. He’s consuming me.

“It works,” he says as his hand starts to rub circles on my skin, and my eyelids flutter shut. It throbs where he touches me, my bruises sore, but I can’t even really register it. He feels too good right now. All I care about is that he never stops touching me.

“Oh my god,” I whimper when his fingers drag down to my stomach.

“It’s bad,” he says, his voice low and dangerous.

Yes. Yes it is bad. If he keeps doing this, my dick is gonna leak all over him.

“Does it hurt?”

“My dick?” I gasp. Because yes. Yes, it does.

“No. Your body.”

“I mean, at the moment, it aches with sexual frustration. The bruises are nothing but a distant memory.”

Anthony huffs a small laugh and then presses me back slightly until I’m leaning against his desk. My dick bobs against my stomach, smearing precum on my skin. This is indecent, even for me. I should be mortified, and yet I’m nothing but shameless.

“I’m going to get your legs,” he says as he takes a seat in his leather chair, looking every bit a mafia boss, and lifts my bare foot onto his lap. His hands rub the white cream all along my thighs, right near my groin, and I have to bite my lip to hold back a desperate groan.

“You love to torture people, don’t you?” I blurt.

“I do,” he says, his eyes flicking up to meet mine. His fingers are gingerly massaging the back of my calf for no reason other than he can. It’s driving me crazy.

“I can tell. I’m being tortured right now.”

His lips twitch as he switches legs and continues to massage me gently. He’s moving slower, I swear. He’s dragging this out. He’s doing this on purpose.

Finally, he sets my foot down and stands up. “Turn around. Hands on the desk.”

“Good god,” I moan as I spin around. “This is like a porno.”

He doesn’t reply to my comment, just dips his fingers back in that jar and continues to rub it on me, starting at my neck and making his way down my back to my waist. I’m practically vibrating with need at this point. I’m purring like a fucking cat.

“I need to do this morning and night for best results,” he says suddenly, pulling my mind out of the gutter for just a second before it dives right back in and rolls around in the filth.

“I won’t survive it,” I say. “I’ll be dead if you do this twice a day.”

“The only people who will be dead are the people who did this to you,” he murmurs so lowly I almost don’t make the words out. But I do. I hear every single one.

The threat of it only makes my dick leak more. A drop falls to his desk top, and I stare at it. It’s in the shape of a heart.

“I’m dripping on your desk,” I whisper as Anthony’s hand cups my ass.

More precum gathers on the tip of my dick, and I arch back slightly, wanting him to touch my butt some more.

He obliges, massaging my cheeks.

Another dribble falls onto the desk, and I stare down at it, trying to regulate my breathing.

It’s not working.

I’m panting like a dog in heat.

His hands move down to the back of my thighs and my vision almost whites out.

“Oh god, stop. Anthony. Stop or I’m gonna come. I swear I will.”

His hands suddenly move away from my skin, and I feel like I can breathe. Sort of. Mostly.

I’m wheezing.

“I made a mess all over your desk. I’m sorry, but I warned you and you didn’t listen.”

A tissue is handed to me, and with a shaky hand, I wipe up my precum. It smears and leaves a streak, but I can’t be bothered to do better. He’ll just have to live with his choices.

“Are we done?” I ask, turning to look over my shoulder, trying not to look at him too hard. But it’s not easy to not ogle. He’s sitting in his chair, his legs sprawled in front of him, one of his hands grasping onto the arm, the other touching his jaw.

“Yes. We’re done. Tomorrow, be here at eight.”

“In the morning?” I ask, turning around fully and grabbing the base of my hard dick. It positively throbs. It wants to explode all over his nicely pressed pants.

“Yes. I have work to do after that, and I want to make sure this gets applied.”

I nod and then reach for my underwear, pulling them on with a gasp. The ointment has definitely helped, but it’s not a miracle potion. I’m still ridiculously sore.

“What kind of work? Cutting people’s hearts out? Rubbing your hands all over unsuspecting gay guys?”

Anthony’s lips twitch once more and then his hand drops from his jaw.

“My business is none of yours.”

I sigh as I try to pull on my pants, nearly toppling over in the process. Anthony moves quickly, righting me and helping me step into my sweats. The way his knuckles drag up my skin as he pulls them around my hips makes me groan and gasp.

“Good fuck,” I say, my eyelids fluttering.

“Yes,” he says as he slowly ties the drawstring, his knuckles sliding over my cock in the process. He’s done this on purpose. I can’t prove it, but I stand by this.

He’s teasing me in his own way.

He may be straight, but he’s tempting me. He knows exactly what he’s doing.

“Tomorrow morning,” he says as he pulls my shirt over my head and I push my arms through the holes.

“Fine,” I say and then adjust myself before moving toward the door and tugging it open. “Tomorrow.”

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“Teddy,” I say as I make my way back to my room. I’m shaking slightly, trying to will my dick to go down. If big-man Teddy notices it, he says nothing. Of course he says nothing. He says not one word about anything. Not that I’m deterred.

“Teddy, let me tell you what just happened to me in that office,” I say as I rest my body against the staircase railing. “Anthony put some kind of cream all over my naked body.”

Teddy’s chest heaves, and he eyes me for just a second before he turns his gaze forward.

“I mean, does he normally put ointment on dudes?”

When he doesn’t answer, I just continue my way up the stairs. “I mean, of course you won’t answer that, but his hand was on my butt. He grabbed it. Massaged it.”

I pause again and take a deep breath. Good god, I feel so weak. Either that or all my blood is pooling in my dick and not in my muscles where I desperately need it.

“How am I supposed to do this twice a day until my bruises heal, hm? Tell me this?”

He does not tell me this. He stays quiet. Just looms next to me like a gargoyle.

I sigh and rub at my face, trying to cool my overheated body.

“He told me not to sleep with any of the bodyguards. But we can be friends, right?”

I come to a stop at my bedroom door and glance up at Teddy. He’s not looking at me, but I can feel him listening.

I step forward and wrap my arms around him, making him startle slightly.

“You looked like you needed a hug, big guy.”

His eyes shift down to me before moving up to the wall behind me.

“Alright, well, see you tomorrow!” I say and then step inside my room, my eyes adjusting to the darkness. In my bed, I see a lump and move toward Angel, who is buried under the covers.

“Scoot,” I whisper, and Angel just shifts over, letting me pull my clothes off and snuggle in next to him.

Odd, the ointment seems to be working. Suddenly, I’m not as sore as I expected to be.

“You smell like Aggie’s special super-secret ointment.”

“Mhm,” I say as I pull the soft blanket up around my face.

“Oh, and before I forget, Brayden has been blowing up your phone. So I just shut it off.”

“Yeah? I should probably check it. See if anyone’s missed me.” Like my parents or Ben, but then again, it’s only been a few days. I’m sure Anthony has taken care of all the finer details.

Actually, I know he has. He’s always so thorough.

“Mhm. Okay, whatever you want. Night, love,” Angel says, dozing off, his soft snores lulling me toward sleep.

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I try not to be overly eager for my morning rub-down with Anthony. So I make sure not to arrive early. In fact, I arrive exactly two minutes late.

Probably didn't help that I got distracted turning my phone on and going through all the messages left there. I noted that someone had replied to a message from my mom and also to Ben.

Probably Anthony, or maybe Angel.

And then there were the plethora of messages my ex had sent me. Most were sappy and apologetic for the way he treated me. He'd tried to keep me in the closet for fear of outing himself, and I refused to be stuffed in there. Did that once, won't do it again.

The sex was pretty good though. I kinda miss that.

Although, I do have Anthony now. And his hands all over me.

Oh god, I want his hands all over me. It's enough to make me forget all about Brayden and his stupid, dumb face and his obsession with closets.

Teddy is outside Anthony's office door, his big arms folded across his chest. I don't know when this man sleeps, but it can't be much. Maybe he's a monster in disguise and doesn't need sleep.

"Hey, big man," I say with a smile, running a hand through my damp hair. "Got an appointment with the boss."

His eyes flick down to mine, but he doesn't move. He's like a statue, built like one too.

"I know, I know, I'm late," I explain, tugging the robe around me a little tighter. Yes, I realize that I'm wandering around in the nude, with just this scrap of fabric to hide it, but honestly, I just showered, and if Anthony peels me out of my clothes again, I'm going to beg him to fuck me.

To go gay for just a few minutes.

Seconds, really. That's all I'd need.

And while I do like to tease him and aggravate him, I don't want to proposition him out of desperation. Then it's not funny. It's just sad. And I am not a sad man. Most of the time.

"But I had to check my text messages and shower, and honestly, Angel was really cuddly and I couldn't peel him off me."

Teddy makes no move to let me inside Anthony's office, just continues to stand there and guard. Well, then.

I guess I could make friendly conversation while I wait. I could do that all damn day.

“So, Teddy, how was your night?” I ask as I take a seat in one of the chairs situated in the hall, probably for times like this when Boss-man makes people wait. I bet he does that a lot. I bet it’s a power play. Probably gets off on it. “Did you do anything exciting?”

He doesn’t answer, so I continue on.

“I mean, I went straight to bed, but I bet you did something really crazy, huh? Did you like, run around naked? Oh god, tell me you run around naked? I would love to see that...”

The door opens suddenly and Anthony appears, my voice trailing off when I catch sight of him.

“Oh, hello.”

Anthony is frowning, his lips pulled tight. “What did I say about flirting with my bodyguards?”

I tap at my lips gently. “I think you just told me not to sleep with them. And honestly, I would never.”

Teddy huffs, and I eyeball him. Was that him communicating? Because I’m so intrigued with this man. I’d love to hear his voice.

“Get inside,” Anthony says darkly, and I just sigh and move toward him, tugging my robe tighter around me. It’s ridiculous really, because I’m going to be stripping this off soon.

Just the thought of being naked around Anthony again gets me hard.

Oh, who am I kidding? I’ve been hard since last night.

This is going to be so embarrassing.

“You’re late,” he tells me, and I scoff.

“I was two minutes late, and don’t judge me, you were even later.”

“Because I was waiting for you.”

I huff, getting nowhere. We’ll go around like this for ages.

“Fine, I’ll concede. I was late. Let’s get this show on the road. I have very important things to do.”

I don’t. Not really. Honestly, after this, I’m going to jack myself until I see stars.

That’s my plan.

The door closes behind me and Anthony walks over to his desk and pulls out that glass jar.

“Take it off,” he growls, and my god, am I panting? Yeah, I’m panting like a dog in heat.

“If you ask nicely, I will,” I manage to snark back.

*Good for you, Tatum. You have a spine. You will not bend over every time he opens a jar.*

His body freezes, a slight hesitation at my resistance.

“Tatum. Get your ass over here. I’m not going to beg. I never fucking do.”

Oh god, is that a wheeze? I just wheezed. It whistles out of me like a fog horn. I could direct maritime traffic at this point.

The jar settles onto the desk with a thunk, and I meet his dark stare. “Honestly, could you tone down the fierce sexiness, please? My dick can’t take it.”

“Get over here,” he says, ignoring my request completely.

Well, okay then. I move toward him, undoing the strap of my robe as I go. My dick pokes out first, eager and hungry, the tip already gleaming with precum.

Anthony taps his fingers impatiently on the top of his desk as I come to a stop before him.

“Off,” he says, glancing at my robe.

I sigh and let it slide down my body and puddle at my feet. The rush of cool air hits my exposed skin, and I feel it start to pebble under his gaze.

Oh Lord, have mercy.

Two fingers sensually dip into the ointment before they rise up to my left shoulder. My mind has gone full perversion. I can imagine those two fingers coated in lube, running down my crack and into my tight, waiting hole.

Fuck, I’d be so here for it.

I’d let him do that. Anytime.

His fingers press against my skin, and I let out a long exhale, trying to keep my cool but really failing. As they rub slow, sensual circles around my chest, I bite my lip to keep the whimpers inside.

It’s not working. I’m pathetic.

His hands move from my chest to my stomach, doing things to my libido that I didn’t know were possible. But he seems entirely unaffected. This isn’t doing it for him at all. Which is fine.

That is totally fine.

I'm horny enough for the two of us.

"Lean back," he instructs, sitting down in that leather chair and taking one of my legs into his hand, repeating the process from last night. Only this time, when his palm grazes my thigh, he brushes against my hard dick, and I moan.

Loudly.

A small chuckle leaves his lips, and I frown.

He thinks this is funny? I'm sure he does. He has no idea what his hands on my skin does to me.

No idea.

They're magical and forbidden. They're something I want, but can't have.

Suddenly, there's a knock on the door and someone steps in. Confusion sets in and then panic. I grab a piece of paper from a stack to my right and press it over my straining dick. I can see the precum that was settled on the tip soaking through the paper, but it's too late now.

For the first time in my life, I feel modesty.

I don't want anyone to see what state I'm in.

"What?" Anthony asks, his hands never leaving me, his eyes focused on my leg. It's almost as if the other man doesn't exist. He just moves on to the next leg as if no one is there.

"Excuse me, sir, but there's been an issue with number seven," the man says, his gaze firmly pinned to the wall, thankfully.

I've seen this man around. Dark hair, dark brown eyes, wide shoulders. Don't know his name though. Should learn his name.

But not right now. Right now, I can't speak. I've swallowed my tongue. It's in my dick with every other part of me.

"Hm," he hums. "I see. I take it Luca isn't back yet?"

"No, sir."

"Give me ten minutes," he says. "I take it you can keep the situation under control?"

The man winces and nods. "Yes, sir."

"Good."

The man nods again and then disappears, the door shutting with a click. I stare down at Anthony, who doesn't seem to be in any kind of rush. No, that ten minutes will wait. Time stops for him.

"What was that?" I ask.

He doesn't meet my gaze, just keeps rubbing. Torture, really. "Nothing."

"I mean, I was naked and he just came in! Where was Teddy? Doesn't he guard the door?"

"Viktor can always come and go as he pleases. Don't worry, he won't look."

I stare down at the paper hiding my junk and then peel it away, some of my splooge attached to it.

"I hope this wasn't important," I say, my cheeks reddening.

He eyes it. "Just set it down."

I do as he says as his hands leave my calf. "Stand up and turn around."

With trembling arms, I push myself up and then turn my back to him. I can feel his breath against my neck as I watch those two fingers dip back into the ointment. So fucking sexy. So fucking hot. It has no right to look that way.

It's positively indecent.

I start to pant again when his hands land on my shoulders and move down my spine to my sides, grazing my hips and then finally landing on my ass. When he drags his palms down the back of my thighs, I start to vibrate with lust. I'm practically whining now.

Fuck, what I wouldn't do for a quick fuck, a quick finger in my hole while I jack off.

I'd give my kidney for that at the moment. And I bet Anthony knows organ smugglers. I bet they'd take it too.

"Your bruises look better," he says softly, and I nod, unable to speak. If I could, I'm sure it would come out as a squeak.

"They should be healed by the end of the week if we continue this regimen."

"Mhm," I say with a nod, trying to keep my body from shaking, but unable to manage it. He must feel it. He has to know what he's doing to me.

Suddenly, his hands leave me, and I curl my fingers against the desk, trying to will myself to move, but unable to do so. I need to get my breathing under control. I need to fucking *breathe*.

I hear a drawer open to my left and then a bottle of lube is set down next to my curled fists. My eyes stick to it. They can't move. Why the fuck does Anthony have a bottle of lube in his drawer? Oh god, does he sit here in his office, drinking a glass of whiskey, sprawled out, his shirt sleeves rolled up, his veins bulging as he jacks himself?

Oh god, the visual.

It's so distracting that I don't even notice him flipping the top open and squirting some on his palm.

"Wha—" I begin, but those words are cut off when his hand wraps around my dick.

"Oh my god!" I cry out, my body jerking back and falling into his chest. He's touching my dick! He's touching me. I stare down at those tattooed fingers wrapped around my hard length and let out a gasp.

"Shut up and take what I'm giving you," he says lowly, his free arm coming around my chest to hold me against him, and I shake my head before nodding. Of course. Of course I'll take it. Is he dumb?

I'll do anything he says at this point.

"You have two minutes to come."

Oh, doesn't he know? I only need two seconds.

His fist tightens on me and he starts to shuttle it up and down my dick, making me cry out. Curses to the gods for them making his hand so nice and perfect, curses to my dick for liking it so much. Curses to Anthony for being so fucking hot that my brain is now scrambled.

His fist works faster, tighter, almost too painful, but it doesn't matter. I'm close. So damn close.

My balls are drawn up, that tingle settling deep in my spine. I'm gasping and drooling, my eyes rolling back in my head as I fuck my hips up into his fist over and over. With a cry, his name on my lips, I explode across his hand, some of my cum hitting his desk. Ropes of it, streams, so much that I worry my orgasm may never stop. That I'll be a shriveled husk at the end of this.

And then it does stop, tapers off into silence, and I'm left completely shattered. Broken. Irreparable.

"Good boy," he says as he lets go of me. I stumble forward and cling to the desk for dear life. What just happened? What did he do?

*Good boy? Oh fuck. Oh fuckity fuck.*

"I'll have someone clean this mess up," Anthony says, wiping off his hand with a handkerchief. I glance over my shoulder at him, my eyes dipping to his crotch. He's not even hard. Why did he do that if there wasn't something in it for him?

"I don't—" I begin and then shake my head, my tongue peeking out to wet my dry lips.

"I don't need to explain, and I have to leave," he says, handing me my robe. "So do you."

He helps me put it on, and with shaky legs, I'm led out of his office, his hand on the small of my back. I can feel that touch everywhere. It positively burns.

Teddy is outside, his eyes on the wall opposite me, his arms still folded across his chest.

Anthony doesn't even look back as he leaves me, striding away, his long, strong legs eating up the floor to the door that leads outside.

I have no idea where he's going, and honestly, I couldn't care less at the moment.

All I can think about is that his hand was on my dick. He touched me until I came.

He said I was a good boy.

"Teddy," I say, swallowing roughly and rubbing at my face. Yep, drool. I drooled. My chin is wet. "I'm serious. I need help getting upstairs. I can't walk. Anthony broke me."

Teddy shuffles next to me, probably wondering if I'm joking. But I'm not. I can't walk. My kneecaps have disintegrated. And he must have heard me shouting, pleading. He had to. I wasn't quiet.

"I'm serious. He...I can't..."

Suddenly, I'm lifted up in his strong arms, and Teddy is walking me up the stairs, two at a time. My body lies limp against him, my eyes shutting as I relive those few seconds in Anthony's grip.

He had me in his hands.

Oh god, what a chokehold he has on me.

I may not make it out of this in one piece.

# 5

## ANTHONY

I take the creaky steps down to the caverns below my property. Number seven's causing trouble.

I don't remember him. But then again, after a while they're nothing but blood and organs. Disposable.

"Took you long enough, you shit," a voice says from the shadows, a plume of smoke billowing up from sinister lips.

Luca. My right-hand man. The underboss to the Costello family. Neither of my sons wanted any part of this, and to be honest, I never wanted it for them either. Luca, however, he's been with me for ages, since we were mere boys. He's been with me through the loss of my parents, my wife, the birth of my children. I love him like a brother, and his mind works just like mine.

He will do well as the boss when I'm gone.

He pushes off the wall and his lean, muscular form emerges into the flickering orange lights.

"Viktor said you weren't here yet."

"He never notices when I arrive or leave. He would rather I didn't exist. But I'm here. Just got in from England. Heard your cry of help and came running. Like a good dog."

If he heard any cries, it was Tatum coming all across my desk.

I run my dried cum-stained hand across my chest and arch an eyebrow at my friend.

“Sebastian LeClerc gives his regards, by the way,” he says.

I ignore this and just tilt my head toward the darkness. Sebastian, the infamous assassin and hacker, can wait. The favors I owe him. And I know he always collects.

“Viktor said there was trouble with seven.”

“Fuck if I know what’s going on. I just got here. But let’s go take a look, shall we?”

We make our way down the corridors, my eyes shifting to the doors that have been welded shut every few feet.

Bones. So many bones hidden beneath my property.

Bodies.

Victims, though not innocent.

People who sought to destroy me and the things I love.

They’ve found their graves beneath me, never to escape. I made sure of it.

Moans and screams meet our ears as we turn a corner. The only ones who know how to traverse these passages are me and my most trusted employees. Only a select few out of many. Most aren’t allowed down here, and if they did come down here, they would surely get lost. Luca is familiar with this place though. He helped me map these out.

“Sounds really fucking miserable down here,” he murmurs, taking another puff of his cigarette. “I mean, really, can’t you put them in soundproof rooms? You know I wanted that in the beginning, but you were such a little shit about it. *I wanna hear them scream.*”

I ignore him. This isn’t the first time he’s complained about this.

This isn’t supposed to be a pleasant getaway for the people who die down here. It’s supposed to be hell. They’re supposed to hear each other and want to end it.

When we turn another corner, the screams and moans become louder. Seems that Bane is having far too much fun. He never was quite right in the head. But then again, that’s why I hired him all those years ago. Well, actually, *hired* is a strong term. He just showed up one day and never left.

“Honestly, we need to get Bane a girlfriend,” Luca says when we hear a maniacal laugh and the whirl of an electric saw.

“What if he doesn’t like girls?”

“Fine. A boyfriend then. He just needs to get his dick wet, Anthony. He’s fucking nuts.”

“Someone has to do it,” I reply when we come to a stop in front of a man of indiscernible age wearing goggles and an apron, his entire body and face covered in blood.

“Hey, guys!” he says with a grin, the man before him writhing in pain. I glance down and see that he’s missing an ear and part of his leg.

Seems he deserved it. This one touched Tatum.

“You should really wear more protection,” Luca says, but Bane just shrugs him off.

“I mean, I *could*,” he says with a snort. “But I can’t be bothered.”

He pulls the goggles up and his hair stands up from the force of it. He can’t be more than twenty-five. Or maybe he’s thirty-five. He could be sixty, and I honestly wouldn’t know. No one does. He’s a mystery. I’m careful to vet all my men, but Bane’s past was completely wiped clean.

I still trust him though. Mostly.

He’s a psycho, and that’s exactly the role I needed filled.

And he does a great job taking people apart. Piece by piece.

Luca snorts and takes a long drag of his cigarette before eyeing the man, who is sobbing before us. Disgusting really.

“Can you make him shut up?” I ask Bane, who scratches at his chin, blood smearing across his jaw in the process.

“I mean, you already cut his tongue out. I could take his head off, but I thought you wanted me to draw this out.”

“Hm,” I say, not sure what I’d like Bane to do. I would like this body buried with the others, but at the same time... *He. Touched. Tatum.*

“This carnage have anything to do with the new addition to your household?” Luca asks.

I eye him and give a slight nod.

“Thought so. Heard all about that,” he says as he sucks down the last bit of his cigarette and then leans forward and puts it out on the bloody man’s arm.

He screams, his tongueless mouth open wide. The smell of burned skin permeates the room, and I inhale it.

Good.

Let him fucking rot.

Bane giggles and puts his goggles back on. “Alright, you both done? I’m not quite done with this masterpiece.”

Luca huffs a laugh and then nods toward the door. “Yeah, we’ll get out of your hair. We’re here to see seven anyways.”

“Oh, yeah. He’s strung up in his cell. You’re good to go see him. I mean, Boss, it would be nice if you didn’t cut their tongues out right away. Because then we could actually get information from them.”

I stare at him so long that he shifts on his feet, almost looking nervous, but then he just chuckles with a wide grin. “But you do you!”

And then a saw whirls in the background, and he lifts it above his head.

“You’re gonna lose your kneecap, handsome,” Bane says almost flirtatiously.

Damn, this has to be where my son got his love of saws, or at least Bane helped it grow.

“Alright, let’s get this over with. I want a shower,” Luca says, turning away from the screams coming from Bane’s victim and moving toward one of the cells where our guests are kept.

Most are empty now, their bodies stowed behind those walls we passed earlier. In a matter of days, that sad, screaming man will be joining the corpses lined there.

My own catacombs, like I said.

I’m bound straight for hell, and I don’t even fucking care.

“Alright, what does number seven have to say? What do you think?” Luca asks as he unlocks a door and it swings open. And just like Bane said, there’s the guy, strung up on the wall, his body shaking, from pain I’m sure.

“Alright, Mr. Seven. What do you know?” Luca asks, lighting up another cigarette and inhaling deeply.

I eye the man, blood dripping from his wounds. He’s practically flayed open, his skin hanging off his body in strips.

Bane had fun with him.

Probably spent a long while here. I glance around and see a half-eaten sandwich in the corner. Seems he had lunch here too.

Which is unsurprising. Bane’s never had a problem eating with the bodies.

He would have made a good forensic pathologist if his career hadn’t led him to criminal activities.

I eye the man again and feel my body heat with rage. Ah, yes. I remember this one. He had his foot on Tatum’s head, ready to stomp when I came bursting into the filthy bathroom.

He was going to murder him.  
This shit stain deserves it all.  
They always deserve it though.

Seven's eyes are wide and panicked. Hm, I take that back. His one eye. Seems the other has been scooped out. I bet it's in a jar in Bane's office. I bet he looks at it daily.

My lips twitch at the thought, and I run a hand across my jaw.  
"Come on, man. Spit it out, as best you can. And maybe we'll let you live," Luca lies.

No one escapes the chambers.  
The man starts to mutter, blood pooling from his lips, spittle trailing down his chin.

"This is really gross," Luca says with a wince. "I mean, really."  
I ignore Luca's grumbling.  
"I can't understand him, can you?" I ask, and Luca eyes me through the haze of smoke.

"Nope, and next time, listen to Bane. Save the tongue so they can talk."  
"Perhaps," I say, knowing I won't change my mind. I quite like the screams that come with them losing that part of them. Their means to communicate.

The way it makes the hope dull from their eyes.  
Yes, I don't think I want to give that up. I am The Silencer after all.  
"Waaaaaa," the man moans, and Luca pulls another drag from his cigarette.

"Jesus. What do you think that means? Kind of sounds ghastly."  
"Waaaaaa," the man says again, and I sigh as Luca gives me a knowing smirk.

"Told you so. Tongues, man. Gotta keep 'em."  
"Shut up," I say and then eye the man, trying to figure out a way to get him to tell us what we need to know. Problem is, Bane removed all his fingers.

"I swear to God, this is what I come home to," Luca grunts. "Bane needs some self-control and so do you."

I mean, perhaps he's right, but I won't admit it. I'm the boss. I make the final call.

"Oh, hey again! Seven's talking about war," Bane says, appearing randomly in the doorway, a severed leg in his arms. "Seems they're coming

for us. Big time.”

I stare at the man strung up and watch as he bobs his head in agreement.

“How informative. But I already knew that. The Fallen Aces have been after us for years.”

The man’s eye widens and he grunts again, trying to tell me something else, but there’s nothing left to say. And he can’t anyways.

I stole that from him.

“Bane, we’re done here. Get rid of the garbage,” I say as I walk out, Luca trailing behind me, quiet except for the way his lips wrap around that cigarette and pull.

“War, huh?” Luca asks, and I nod.

“The bar Tatum was at is owned by the Fallen Aces gang. They already want in on the cocaine trade, the designer drugs, and it seems us coming in and killing all those fuckers didn’t help matters.”

Luca whistles and takes another drag of nicotine. “Well, fuck. Seems your boy made the wrong choice in where he went to grab a drink.”

I turn to glower at him. “Seems so.”

“You ready to do this? This is going to get complicated,” Luca says, knowing what this means. Everything may change from here.

I nod.

“Seems I am.”

“Fuck,” Luca mutters and then slaps me on the back roughly. “Alright, Brother. Let’s fucking do this.”

---

We make it back to my office, the doors closing behind us with a snick. Luca flicks the lock and then leans against the door, his hand coming up to rub at his jaw.

“So what’s the plan, Boss?”

Moving toward my decanter, I pick it up and give us both a heavy pour. I hand one to Luca, and he takes it. He swigs it back and gasps.

“Fuck, that’s strong.”

“That was a five-hundred-dollar drink.”

“Sucked, to be honest,” Luca says and then holds out his glass.

I eye him but refill it. Who am I to tell him no?

“More,” Luca says when I only give him two fingers. I scoff, but fill it twice as full, watching as he sips at it this time.

“Good. Enjoy it.”

“I might as well gulp it down. We’ll be dead soon.”

“No one dies. No. One.”

“Except the bad guys.”

I eye my best friend. “Some would say we’re the bad ones.”

He scoffs and then reaches into his coat pocket, pulling out his packet of cigarettes.

“Some would say that, although, I think we’re pretty decent. I mean, look at our parents. We’re basically saints.”

He grins at me and then leans back, knowing not to smoke in my house. My late wife hated it. And therefore, it’s not tolerated inside.

“At least we don’t beat up kids for being different,” Luca says, and I nod.

“No, we don’t.”

Silence falls upon us, and for a moment, my mind wanders to Tatum. Where is he now? What’s he been doing all day? Teddy gives me updates when warranted, but it’s been silent since this morning.

Perhaps nothing eventful has happened outside those labyrinth hallways.

I can only hope.

But then again, Tatum is always finding trouble. He’s chaotic.

“What’s that look for?” Luca asks, his eyes crinkling at the corners as he watches me.

“There’s no look.”

“Oh, there’s a look.”

I glance away and sip at my drink. It burns going down, but I don’t even let myself be bothered by it.

“I’d like to meet him,” Luca says gently, walking on eggshells now.

“No.”

“I will have to eventually.”

“Eventually,” I say and then take another large gulp. At this rate I’ll be drunk by dinner. Might be a good idea, since afterward I’ll be rubbing my hands all across Tatum. And it sparks something inside of me.

“I may have to take an extensive walk around the grounds after this.”

I narrow my eyes at him. I know what he’s doing.

I won't allow it.

"We have other matters to discuss first."

"Yeah, but it's such a downer."

"That it is. But with what went down three days ago, it's something we can't put off. And we know the Fallen Aces are going to use this as an excuse to go hard."

"I guess so."

Our gazes meet and he runs a hand across his face again.

"Alright, let's get started. And then after this, want to go a round in the ring?"

"Fuck yes."

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# 6

TATUM

I spent a glorious morning napping. And then the reality of my life came crashing back in. I wasn't feeling back to one hundred percent, but obviously I was well enough to have an orgasm, so that meant I really needed to do my homework. I'm in my last semester of college, and I need to pass my classes so I can move on with my life.

I have plans, dammit.

Ones that don't involve Anthony and his sexy hands.

Probably.

Most likely not. I mean, if he wanted me, how could I say no?

But Anthony is straight. I know so.

The only reason he touched my dick and got me off is... Well, I don't really know why, but I'm sure there's a very good non-gay reason for it.

But for now, I need to focus on my studies. I'm getting my bachelor's in social work, with a focus on adoptions. I plan on attending graduate school next year.

None of these plans involve a mafia boss.

None.

For a moment, I wonder when I'll be able to leave. Does Anthony have some other motive for keeping me here, besides keeping me safe? I don't know and I honestly don't know if I care. I'm having far too much fun with

him and it's not like I'm suffering here. This place is enormous, and Agatha is such a good cook. I have zero complaints.

"I brought you dinner," Angel says, appearing suddenly in my room. "Agatha said to make sure you ate it. All of it. She wants the plate licked clean when I bring it back downstairs."

He hands it to me, and I glance down at the dish full of mashed potatoes, asparagus, and grilled chicken in some kind of white sauce.

"This looks amazing."

"It is. I've already eaten. Gobbled it right up."

I grin at him and then set my laptop down, grabbing on to my fork and knife and cutting into it. The first bite melts in my mouth, and I realize that I haven't eaten in ages.

Anthony shocked the hunger right out of my system. It's now, upon placing food in my mouth, that I realize my stomach has been eating itself since noon.

I inhale the entire plate, pausing only to gulp down the fizzy water Angel brought me.

"Oh god, my stomach," I say, holding the little bulge that appears through my shirt. I give a small burp and then another. "I'm going to barf."

"I mean, you swallowed twice the entire time." I grin at him salaciously, and he giggles. "That's not what I meant, you heathen."

"It sure sounded like it. If I didn't know how innocent you are..."

"I am," he says with a pout. "I'm so innocent, it's ridiculous."

"And you're surrounded by all these hot dudes all day. How do you manage it?"

"It's a struggle, but imminent death if someone touches me deters them from coming close to me."

I snort, and Angel wiggles closer to me.

"One day you'll find someone, I promise," I say, pulling him into a hug.

"Maybe," he says and then sighs, resting his head on my arm.

"I'm honestly probably going to end up in an arranged marriage."

I scoff at that. "What makes you think that? Diablo and Skylar weren't arranged."

"No, they weren't, but Diablo can take care of himself. I'm different. I know that."

"Your dad would never," I try to reassure him. "He's so protective of you."

“I know, but I’ve overheard him talking about it before. I think it’s in my cards.”

“Fuck that. No,” I say, feeling anger bubble up within me. No way is Anthony going to marry Angel off. Angel deserves love, he deserves to be happy.

“You deserve to be married for love. I’ll die on that hill.”

Angel peers up at me, his blue eyes twinkling.

“Thank you. I sure hope so, but I do realize, in this world, some things are out of our control.”

I purse my lips and grab on to his hand, linking my fingers with his.

“I will fight for you over this.”

“I appreciate it, but it’ll be fine. Anyways, I know you have to go see my dad, but after, would you like to go on a moonlit walk with me?”

“Oh, how romantic.”

“Just you and me, baby,” he says, pressing a kiss to my cheek.

It’s nothing romantic, not at all. Just two people who’ve found platonic friendship in one another. Besides Ben, Angel will always be my person.

“Well, and Ben,” Angel amends. I swear, he can read my mind. “Has he called?”

“No, you?”

“No, I’m sure he’s busy getting railed into next year by Cash and Ford.”

“Yeah, he’s ass up all day,” I snicker.

Angel sighs. “What’s it like, getting fucked?”

I eye my friend and shift on the bed. “It’s pretty damn fun.”

“Yeah?” Angel asks as he sits up a little taller. “I mean, I’ve watched porn, but what does it feel like?”

“If it’s done well, it feels really fucking nice.”

“How’s it done well?”

“When they take their time, make you wild with lust, so much so that when they first enter, it doesn’t even sting. It just feels glorious.”

He sighs and then lays his head onto my shoulder once more.

“One day,” he whispers, and I whisper back.

“Yeah, one day.”

---

I'm on time to my nightly rub-down with Anthony, and of course he's late. I don't know where he is, but he seems to be doing everything in his power to irritate me.

As annoying as it is, he's still ridiculously attractive.

So, instead of bitching, I sit outside his office, chattering Teddy's ear off until he grunts a response.

"Uhh," he says on a puff of air.

I perk up, feeling like I've won the lottery.

"Oh my god, what was it I said that prompted a response?" I ask, trying to replay what I was blathering on about in my head. I honestly can't remember, but it was something that got him to react.

He obviously doesn't come to my aid and tell me. Not at all. He just lets me frantically think about what I was going on and on about.

I come up with nothing, it's elusive.

I run a hand through my hair and start to pace when Anthony appears through the front door, a frown on his face, his eyes narrowed in frustration. He obviously came from something that's put him in a mood.

I tighten the belt around my robe and feel my dick perk up.

Seems I like the sight of him all grumpy and growly. There's nothing more to it than that.

I want him to fuck me while he frowns at me.

"Inside. Now," Anthony says, stalking to the office door, unlocking it, and walking through. I eyeball Teddy, but he doesn't give me any kind of signal about what's to come.

God, I hope it's me.

I want to come my eyeballs out.

"Tatum," Anthony growls, and I move a little slower.

I don't know what prompts me to do this, but I want to annoy him, just a little. I shouldn't push his buttons, but I can't help but reach out and flick them. Just once. Wanna see what happens.

"Close the door, Teddy," Anthony commands, and then as soon as my feet hit the rug inside his office, the door clicks shut ominously—or is it sexually?—behind me.

I wander into the room, noting the fireplace is turned on, the lamps lowly lit. Anthony is pouring himself a drink, his shoulders bunched up and tense under his suit jacket, so I wander over to the bookshelves, letting my eyes flit across the spines.

“So, why are you such a grump tonight?” I ask, pulling out a book and flipping through it. Hm, a book on botany. How boring.

No one wants to read about plants when they could read about peens.

“I’m not a grump.”

“You are so very grumpy. Are you sad? Did something happen at work? Horny? Need to get off?”

He takes a sip of that golden liquid, his throat bobbing in the firelight as he watches me. But he doesn’t answer.

“Or maybe it’s because you’re going to sell off your son to the highest bidder.”

His eyes flash, and he sets his drink down on the table with a clink.

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

“Oh, just something that Angel told me. About an arranged marriage.”

He doesn’t answer, but stalks over to me silently, his eyes mere slits as he watches me.

“What I decide for my son is none of your business.”

“Oh, I know. I’m just telling you that it’s the wrong choice,” I say with a shrug and place the book back on the shelf. I’m trying to hide the fact that my heart is pounding ridiculously hard, and the fact that he’s looking at me like I’m prey is making me pant.

When I turn to move to the next shelf, Anthony is standing right before me.

His lean, muscular body is blocking my way, and when I take a step to the side, he reaches out, his fingers lacing through the belt on my robe and tugging.

“I’m sure you have all sorts of thoughts that you’d like to share with me,” he says, his voice almost threatening.

His wrist flicks and my robe parts, revealing my nude body beneath.

“But I’d rather you keep those tucked away. I don’t want to hear them.”

I wheeze when his hand grabs on to the belt and pulls it through the confines. It ends up wrapped tauntingly around his fist as he takes a step closer to me.

My throat clicks as my back hits the shelf behind me. Books rattle in their places, and I tilt my chin up, seeing the flash of gold in Anthony’s dark eyes.

“Get on the couch.”

I gulp once more and then shake my head. “I’d like to look at the books some more. So, I think you’ll have to wait. Maybe there’s one on building trust in children.”

His jaw clicks as he steps even closer. My bare, hard cock brushes against his abdomen, and I bite my bottom lip.

His fist rises, the belt of my robe wrapped around his knuckles, which are bruised to hell. They drag across my jaw gently.

My eyelids flutter, my entire body thrumming with pent up lust when suddenly his other hand slides across my bare hip and squeezes. Not too hard because I’m still bruised there, but enough to pull me into him.

“You need to learn when to bite your tongue.”

“I so do,” I agree when he removes his hand from my side and grabs on to the other end of the belt.

“But I don’t think you’ll listen. You never do. So I’m going to have to make you.”

He drags his thumb down my bottom lip, and my mouth parts in response. When it does, he presses the cotton belt into my mouth, gagging me. With deft movements, he ties it behind my head, not too tightly, but enough to keep me from speaking.

“Perfect,” he says darkly before stepping back and taking me in. A gag in my mouth, my robe parted to show my hard, weeping cock.

I don’t even know if he likes what he sees, but he’s looking. Very attentively.

“Couch,” he finally says.

I reach up to touch the belt between my lips, but don’t remove it. God, I’m living for this. I want him to tie me up all damn day.

He could do this, and I’d be a willing participant.

He doesn’t seem to understand my willingness though because he grabs my wrists and tugs me forward. I wasn’t going to take the belt off, for fuck’s sake. I’m going to leave it there and let Anthony have his way with me.

He can so have his way with me.

When we get to the couch, he reaches his hands up and drags my robe off. It falls to the ground and my body shakes in response.

He faces me away from him as I hear some fabric rustling, and then I feel it, something soft tying my wrists together. His necktie.

Oh my god.

Oh my *fucking god*.

I don't even have time to comprehend it. It's just there and I'm bound and gagged, completely at his mercy.

At the mafia boss's mercy.

Fuck. Yes.

His hand reaches down and his fingers dip into the ointment with a squelch before he starts to apply it on my back. I start to moan the minute his fingers land on my skin and start to rub. I can't believe he tied me up.

I mean, I can, but fuck me.

Why is this so hot?

*Because it's Anthony.*

"Turn around," he commands when he's done rubbing his hands all over my ass and the back of my thighs.

I do as he says, my fingers curled up into my palms, my fingernails biting into my skin, trying to keep myself from coming just like this.

*Oh god, do not come just like this.*

His hands continue to run all over me, making my gaping, gagged mouth pant. I'm drooling, some running down the sides of my lips but honestly, I don't even care. I just whine.

His fingers drag up my thighs and my head falls back, exposing my bobbing throat to him.

Suddenly, his hands leave my legs and he pushes me backward. I fall with a cry, my bound hands aiding in my fall. Not that I'm hurt. The cushions soften my landing, but the surprise of it has my eyes widening.

Anthony takes a step closer to me, using his knees to push my legs apart. They're spread open, my balls and ass on display as he steps between them and places a hand on the back of the couch, leaning over me.

I stare up at him, the way his shirt is unbuttoned slightly, the way his chest rises and falls.

He's breathing just as hard as me.

Lube appears somehow and dribbles onto my straining dick. I gasp behind my restraints and watch as the liquid slides down my cock and pools around my groin. A moan slips from my mouth when those tattooed fingers wrap around my cock and squeeze.

I don't know why he's doing it, have no idea of the motivation behind it, but even if I could talk, I wouldn't question it. I just arch my hips up,

feeling the sting in my side from my bruised ribs, but I manage to look past it.

I can so look past it for this.

More. I want more.

His fist pumps up and down my length, twisting at just the tip and making me moan in desperation. My balls are drawn up tight, full and ready to explode as he leans even closer, the edge of his suit jacket brushing my bare knees.

Oh, I'm not going to last. I'm going to burst in a matter of seconds.

What if he was lying naked on top of me? I wouldn't survive. I'd just pass on into the afterlife and meet Hades.

He twists his wrist, his fist tightening around my dick, and I jerk my hips up, fucking roughly into his palm. Anthony anticipates every move I make, meeting each of my upward thrusts with a downward stroke. It's perfect, nothing that I ever expected. But of course, it's Anthony, a straight mafia boss who is giving me hand jobs in his office.

“Fuuuuu,” I say, my lips trying to form words.

But it doesn't work. Of course it doesn't. That's the whole point. Anthony made sure I couldn't say another damn word to him.

And now I can't even swear when I feel that telltale tingle in my spine. My thighs start to shake and my entire body is lit on fire. A small ember at first until it travels across my entire body and I'm positively overheating.

Suddenly, my cock jerks in his grip and I feel the rush of it. Euphoria, bliss. I come on a muffled scream as ropes of cum spill from my dick, shooting up and onto Anthony's shirt, some even hitting his chin. It's a feat of physics.

I didn't even know my dick could reach those heights.

I pant beneath him, his hand still on my dick. I don't know why he keeps doing this. I don't even know if he likes it. He's certainly not hard, but the way his eyes flicker as he leans over me, looking down at me, makes my entire body tingle with appreciation.

God, he's so hot. I'd love to see him come undone.

I'd love to hear him moan.

“You needed that,” he says, his fingers loosening their grip on me.

I nod and then watch as he pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and mops up his chin. The scrape of his beard slides against the fabric, and I imagine that stubble on my skin—how it would leave a mark.

I let out a sigh. I do feel better, less contrary and sassy, but honestly at this rate, I'm going to need him to do this for me twice a day from now on. Maybe three times.

Good fuck, I'm getting greedy.

His hands move to my face and his fingers brush the back of my head as he undoes the knot he tied there. When the belt is pulled from my mouth, I smack my lips together and lean forward, letting him pull the restraints from my wrists.

"Not a word," he says lowly, threatening me slightly.

I don't listen.

"I love words though," I say, my throat dry. "And I'm very thirsty."

Anthony hovers above me and then shifts upward, walking toward a small fridge near his desk. He pulls out a water bottle and brings it to me. It's cool, damp with condensation, and when I pull the lid off and take a swig, the cool liquid flows down my throat.

Fuck, that's nice.

That's real nice.

"Better?" Anthony asks, and I eye him over the top of my water bottle.

"Yes, but you? Are you happier?"

He rubs at his chin, the same skin that my cum coated earlier.

He doesn't answer, so I blur, "Are you like, gay? Or bi? Or something? I mean, there is a giant spectrum..."

His eyes flash to mine.

"I'm straight."

"Hm," I say and then take another gulp of water. "Because you've like, touched my dick twice. I've never had a straight man do that to me before."

Anthony walks to his table with the whiskey and pours himself another glass. "It keeps you quiet for a few minutes."

I scoff and then roll my eyes. "I'm not really that quiet about it."

He takes a sip and then nods to the door. "Put on your robe and leave."

"Oh, but I feel like we have so much to unpack," I say with a saucy grin, still trembling slightly from the aftershocks of my orgasm. "So, does this mean if I prattle on and on, you'll touch me again?"

Anthony eyes me, running the rim of the glass over his bottom lip.

"Do you ever listen to authority?"

"I mean, if I'm scared, maybe. You don't scare me though."

I wink at him, and he takes another sip of his drink.

“You should listen though, Tatum. Not doing so could get you into trouble.”

“Like trouble with you?” I ask as I reach for my robe and tug it over me, hiding my dick from view. “Because so far, I’ve been enjoying the punishments.”

“Those aren’t punishments.”

“Okay, whatever you say, Boss-man.”

We’re at a standstill, him watching me sit there on his couch, not moving.

“You do need to leave, Tatum. I have things to do.”

“Like what? I, for one, will be going on a nice romantic walk with your son and Casey. A moonlit walk.”

Anthony shifts on his feet.

“Then you better get going.”

“I should. Can I bring Teddy with me? I have a lot to tell him. He’s a great listener.”

Anthony’s jaw ticks and he moves toward me, making my heart rate triple. Oh god, please shut me up again.

“You can take him, as long as you stick to the gardens,” he says as he stops in front of me. He grabs on to the robe and holds it out in front of him, gesturing for me to get up and put it on.

Well, fine then.

I stand with a slight wince, slipping my arms through the sleeves and letting him help me tie it closed.

“See you in the morning?” I ask when he walks me to his office door.

Anthony nods and ushers me out before closing it behind me.

I honestly don’t know what just happened, but I plan on telling Teddy all about it.

# 7

## ANTHONY

I have the ability to turn things—thoughts, feelings—on and off. In all aspects of my life. I have to in order to get things done, to live with my choices and actions.

The only time in my life that I found it hard was with my late wife, Laura, and those sacred times when I was intimate with her. I let myself feel, let myself show how I felt about her, how I loved her.

When my sons were born, I cried.

When I laid my wife to rest, I broke down alone.

And now with Tatum...

For some reason, I feel the urge to flip the switch and let myself *experience* him.

After getting him off, I see his eyes travel down to my crotch, looking for traces that I'm into this as much as he is. But I never let myself feel things.

Feeling is a weakness.

And yet...

I glance across the gardens from my window, bright with the midday sun, and see Luca making his way toward Tatum and Angelo.

I took care of Tatum again this morning, rubbing cream all over him and then rubbing my hand across his dick, listening with rapt attention as he panted and begged.

I'm slightly addicted to this.

And I don't know why.

I've just always felt very protective of him, despite him doing everything to get under my skin. Maybe it's the way he isn't afraid of me that's made me curious. Bigger, stronger men have been scared of me, but not him.

And I could hurt him with a flick of my wrist.

Not that he seems to care.

He spends every chance he can pushing my buttons.

I watch as Luca comes to a stop next to Tatum, who is chattering away at Teddy as he listens intently. Angelo is farther away in the garden, picking flowers and planting bulbs under the watchful eye of Casey.

My gaze slides back to Luca, taking a seat next to Tatum and grinning at him.

*He's far too charming for his own fucking good,* I think as I grind my teeth together. He always has been. Though he's the same age as me, his light brown hair, smooth skin, and playful attitude have always made him appear younger.

Of course Tatum grins back, his straight, white teeth flashing, his hand reaching out and shaking Luca's. They hold on to each other for a little too long, if you ask me. There was no need for a handshake in the first place.

And Luca should be here with me, planning how to protect everyone in my employ and in my family while also taking down the Fallen Aces, once and for all.

Diablo is already taken care of. I've paid for him and Skylar to fly to Wales and spend time by the sea. It's remote enough that no one would look for them there.

But Angelo...

I run a hand across my jaw, feeling the urge to drink, but I shut it down.

Since Tatum appeared in my life, I've felt slightly out of control. Then again, he knows just how to push me. Even Laura didn't know how to do that.

She was far too sweet, just like Angelo.

But Tatum knows how to get my blood flowing.

I watch as he laughs at something Luca says, and I feel something boil up within me.

Jealousy.

Something I haven't felt until he came into my life.

Even with Laura, I wasn't that possessive. After all, she had Luca as well. He loved her just as much as I did, and she loved us both equally. Sharing her came naturally.

But for some reason, the thought of Luca coming to love Tatum too...

I turn around and stride out of the house, Viktor following me closely. I'm going to need to hire more guards as things escalate with the Aces.

That or my plan to use Angelo will have to come to fruition.

I shut my feelings down regarding that issue, flipping the switch as my legs carry me down the gravel path straight to where Tatum and Luca are conversing. Teddy's gaze swivels to me for a moment before he continues scanning the horizon.

Good man.

He knows his job and his place.

Luca, however...

"Oh, look who it is," Luca says with a grin when he sees me approach. "How am I not surprised by this?"

He grins up at me, and I see mischief bubbling in those dark gray eyes.

"Oh, hello, Anthony. Didn't notice you there," Tatum says, his cheeks slightly pink. Oh, he saw me. He noticed me.

I made him notice me this morning, when my fist was wrapped around his dick. He cried my name when he burst into my hand.

"Luca, we have important matters to discuss," I say, thinking about sending him on another international flight just to get him away from Tatum. Although, that would be a bad idea. I need him here.

I need him by my side.

Just not at Tatum's side.

"I thought our meeting with Raphael was after lunch."

"I've moved it up."

"Well, Boss, I can't accommodate the new schedule. I currently have plans with Tatum here."

Viktor shifts next to me, his knuckles cracking. He can't stand Luca. I know that Luca's disrespect is making him want to throw punches.

Not that I'd allow that between coworkers.

No, I'll deal with Luca in my own way.

Tatum glances up at me and grins, the bruise around his eye still so pronounced, and yet the ointment that Agatha gave me has been working.

In a few days, those bruises will be completely gone.

“And what are these plans?” I ask, holding my hand out to stop Viktor from moving forward and grabbing on to my right-hand man.

“Well, Tatum asked me to take him to see his friend, Ben.”

My nostrils flare as I take a deep breath. “No, absolutely not. Ben can come here.”

Tatum sighs, and Luca runs a hand over his mouth, trying not to smile. That fuck. He knows exactly what he’s doing.

“I’d really like to get out of the house.”

“You *are* out of the house,” I say, pushing my hands into my pockets.

“Yes, but confined to these gardens. I mean, perhaps if I could go down into the—”

“No.”

He rolls his lips between his teeth. “But I’m so very curious.”

Luca lets out a small chuckle, and I glower at him. Perhaps I should let Bane loose on him.

“I think Tatum and Bane would get on well,” Luca says, making my eye twitch.

“Oh, who’s Bane?” Tatum asks, and I see Teddy shift on his feet. Seems even this is making the big man nervous.

“No one,” I snap. “Luca.”

Luca leans back against the bench and crosses one leg over the other.

“Yes, Boss?”

“Perhaps I should send you down to see him. Let him experiment on you,” I threaten, not thinking my words through. I never do that. I’m always methodical. I’m always so careful.

Tatum shifts next to Luca and then meets my gaze. “Now I really want to meet him. Can I?”

“No.”

“But why not?”

Why not? Because Bane would become obsessed with him too. That’s why. Because Tatum is overwhelming.

He’s too much.

Bane would gobble him up, just like everyone else seems to have done.

“Because I said so.”

Tatum turns to Luca. “That only makes me want to meet him more, don’t you think?”

Luca grins and eyes me, looking unrepentant for his part in this. Viktor has steam coming out of his ears, but he remains quiet.

“No Bane. Call Ben and have him come here. You’re not leaving the premises.”

He sighs and then turns to Luca. “And how am I supposed to get laid if I can’t leave?”

I clench my jaw. He’s getting off just fine with me. He doesn’t need to get laid.

“Well, there are plenty of option—” Luca begins, but I cut him off again.

“No. I’ve already told him no. No fucking the bodyguards.”

Luca nods and then uncrosses his legs. “Yeah, that makes sense. We have to be on the lookout for—”

I snap, my temper rising. “Luca, we’re leaving. Now.”

He sighs and stands, reaching down and touching Tatum gently on the shoulder.

“Meet again later?” he asks, and Tatum nods, his cheeks pink.

I don’t fucking know what Luca is doing, but it stops now.

---

“Sorry about that. You know I can’t help but rile you up,” Luca says, his thumb casually scrolling through his phone as he speaks. We’re in the back of the SUV being driven by Viktor to the outskirts of town where we’ll meet with Raphael about his shipments.

“I’d prefer it if you didn’t undermine me in front of Tatum. He’s already bad enough.”

“He’s something,” Luca says with a grin, and I reach over and grab his phone from him.

“No.”

Luca stares at me, and I can see his lips twitching. “I know.”

“No, you don’t know. No. Tatum.”

He nods and then holds his hand out toward me for his phone. “Give me my phone back. I promise to behave.”

I slap it into his palm and turn my gaze back toward the front of the SUV.

I know I could send someone else to do this, but I like to stay involved. I like to know exactly what's going on with the inventory. Especially now with the Fallen Aces really gunning for us. They've always been a thorn in my side, but now they've taken it personally.

They want to burn me to the ground.

"Almost there, Boss," Viktor says as he turns down a narrow street.

We bump along, the wheels catching in some potholes as we go. Luca doesn't seem bothered by it, just eyes his phone once more.

"You know what you're going to do about Mikhail?" Luca asks suddenly, and I stare out the window at the buildings.

He means Mikhail Ivanov, a powerful Russian mafia boss who runs things on the East Coast. And the one I'm currently considering for Angelo.

For protection, for his safety, if nothing else. Joining our families would be the smart thing to do.

But the thought of it makes my head pound.

My sons are what I cherish over all else.

I don't make decisions like this lightly, despite what Tatum may think.

"No. I don't," I reply.

"Here, Boss," Viktor says, turning the car off and stepping out. He opens the car door for us, closing it slightly on Luca when he gets out, making him stumble and lose his footing.

"Oh, fuck off, Vik. How old are you? Goddamn," Luca grumbles, but Viktor ignores him.

And I do too. I'm already sliding out around him and walking up the stairs to the warehouse, Raphael and his men waiting for us near the entrance. They look imposing with their dark clothes and guns slung over their shoulders.

"You made it," Raphael says, holding the door open for me. He's a bigger man than me, with a barrel chest and graying hair. He's been around since before I could even remember. He worked with my father and will be around long after I'm gone, I'm sure. He's indispensable and loyal as fuck. And he's currently the one running the cocaine side of things.

It's not technically associated with my name or my businesses, at least not on paper.

But it's mine all the same.

"Thank you for accommodating the change of time."

“Anytime, Boss. That’s what I’m here for. Hey, Luca. Good to see you.” He reaches out and shakes his hand, pumping roughly once before letting go. “Alright. I have the paperwork for you, as requested.” He hands me a stack of papers and then nods to his left, the door swinging shut behind us. “Right this way.”

Raphael leads us down a small hallway, three other men with guns following along beside us. We can never be too careful, and Raphael is slightly paranoid when it comes to his men and their safety.

I flip through the paperwork as we make our way down a corridor and into the main room, my eyes shifting to the assembly lines, people and machines working to package up the cocaine and get it ready for shipment.

Yes. Yes, I know this makes me a bad man.

But I couldn’t give a fuck what people think.

This is how I provide for my family, and I do it as honestly as possible.

My business is high-end stimulants, but most of my money comes from cocaine and the occasional arms shipment. But the designer drugs are the way of the world now that weed is becoming legal.

“We plan on getting this out tonight. The dock workers are ready to help us transport it,” Raphael says.

“Wonderful,” I reply, walking up to a few of the men and women working the lines and shaking their hands. I like to do this, to let them see my face and speak with me. I may be running an illegal operation, but that doesn’t mean I don’t see my employees as people. They have families, lives of their own. I care about them.

It’s why I have this place so heavily guarded. Not only for my product, but for the people who are in Raphael’s employ. I want them to go home every night to their families.

I want them to be with the people who matter the most.

“A sample for you is right this way,” Raphael says, leading me toward his small office. I follow him inside, with Luca right behind me. On his desk is a pierced block of cocaine, the white powder spilling from it.

I’ve never been one for drugs myself. Luca however...

I nod at my right-hand man, and he sticks his finger directly into it, lacking any and all finesse. This is not like the movies. There’s no slick use of a knife. Luca just twirls his finger around like he’s searching for his prostate before pulling it out and bringing it to his nose.

He snorts some and then rubs it along his gums, his eyes rolling back into his head, smacking his lips with a smile.

“Yeah, mhm. The good stuff. Like coming home.”

I eye him and then take a small hit myself. My mouth tingles, and I feel a small burst of adrenaline as soon as I rub it across my gums.

Yeah, it’s the good stuff. Quality.

Raphael did well. But then, of course he did. He has always done a great job when it comes to this.

“When is the next supply supposed to be in?” I ask, and Raphael pulls out his phone, sliding his thumb across the screen.

“May—”

A shout. Gunshots. Followed by panicked screams. I hear the rapid fire of automatic weapons and the pang of bullets hitting metal and bone.

My body flares with adrenaline, and not from the cocaine but from the pure fury that rises up within me. How dare they.

*How fucking dare they.*

Luca and I crouch low inside the office, our guns pulled from our jackets. Raphael is grabbing a gun from his desk drawer, his cheeks flushed, his chest heaving.

He looks ready to murder.

Someone got in through his defenses.

He’s not going to let this go lightly.

“You think it’s the Aces?” Luca asks, and I nod, feeling my heart pumping wildly in my chest.

“It has to be.”

“We don’t know for sure until we get one of them,” Raphael says, always the voice of reason, even in the midst of chaos. “And I don’t fucking know how they got in.”

“Probably a mole,” Luca says, and Raphael huffs. He doesn’t like that. Not at all. The fact that something slipped past him. He hates it.

He’s probably going to offer to resign over this.

Not that I’ll let him. He’ll resign when he dies.

“Enough. Let’s go,” I snap, nodding to the door. Luca looks at me, a pang moving through his eyes. It’s always like this when we’re in a situation where we could die. I love him like a brother, he loves me as well. We’ve shared so much together, and it could all be over.

With a tilt of my chin he heads out. Raphael follows. I'm last, our bodies shielded by a large shipping container just outside the office. Gunshots continue to ring out, cries and shouts echo off the metal walls. Smoke billows around, white powder in the air.

I'm inhaling it. Cocaine.

Pure cut. Perfection.

Bursts of adrenaline hit my system, and I pull my handkerchief from my pocket and wrap it around my face. Luca and Raphael are doing the same, their eyes wide, pupils dilating.

Fuck.

We're all getting high on this shit. That's not fucking good.

We need to focus. I need to kill all the assholes who made their way into my space unannounced.

I motion to move forward, and we do, my stance still crouched as we move toward the sounds of gunfire.

"Get that shit!" someone yells.

"Find him!" another responds.

Raphael shakes his head and stands, firing off shots as quickly as he can, and Luca and I follow suit, our aim rarely missing our targets. Bodies fall, the gunshots diminishing as we take everyone out.

Everyone who shouldn't be here.

The ones who came in and tried to destroy me and what I've built.

"Go!" I shout to Raphael, who is moving away from our spot and shooting off rapid fire. Luca is beside him, reloading with a flick of his wrist and taking out two more people.

I don't even know how many of them there are, but enough to cause significant damage.

Something hits me in the arm, but the adrenaline moving through me cuts off any and all feeling. I'll deal with it later.

I reload and continue aiming, my eyes narrowed through the smoke and white dust floating through the air.

I feel something trickle down my side as I move away from the barrier protecting me and take someone out, the bullet hitting them in the chest.

They're dressed in black tactical gear with Kevlar, so I aim my gun for his head.

Without a second thought, I pull the trigger, moving past him as he slumps to the ground. I glance to my right and see Luca strangling

someone, blood dripping from his face. With another careful, steady aim from my gun, I blow that person to smithereens.

No one touches what's mine.

"We're good!" Raphael suddenly calls, and Luca lets the man dangling in his arms fall to the ground.

I wipe at my blurring eyes, seeing the carnage around me. Bodies, parents who won't go home to their kids, wives and husbands who won't go home to their spouses. Ruined inventory scattered around the floor. Millions of dollars gone.

"I'm going to kill every last one of them," I mutter, my eyes wet from the drugs still in the air. I'm so fucking high.

I move through the chaos, shouting orders behind my makeshift mask, standing over the still-wriggling body of a man I cut down just minutes ago.

Shame he's still alive.

"Who do you work for?" I ask, taking in his attire, my booted foot on his chest. I see nothing that would identify him, which is smart.

Smarter than those assholes should be.

The man opens his lips, blood pooling at the corner of his mouth, and he smiles crookedly at me.

"Do you work for the Aces?" I ask, my eyes narrowing as I try and decipher what he's saying. He chokes, coughs, offering me nothing of value. *Well then*, I think as I sigh and aim my gun right at his head.

He's better off dead. My finger squeezes the trigger. Bits of his head explode, like a watermelon hitting stone steps, and some unfortunately lands on my pants.

Well, that's tragic.

I lean down and brush it off with the barrel of my gun before making my way across the room to Luca, who is currently interrogating another fallen man with Viktor by his side. I watch as the man says something and Luca rolls his eyes, sighs, and then lifts the gun to the man's head, pulling the trigger without another thought.

He stands up, letting the body plunk backward, and glances my way.

"Yeah, Fallen Aces. Those fuckers. I knew it."

"Shit. Time to burn it down," Raphael says, surveying everything we lost.

"It's fucking time."

---

Viktor is angry, his jaw working back and forth as he drives us back to the house. I can see it in the way he steers the vehicle, his knuckles almost white, his shoulders tense.

Luca, on the other hand, is grinning, his fingers working his shirt open as he leans back casually, his gun on his lap.

“Seems the Aces, and more specifically, Douglas Kennedy, want out of the weed business after all. Although, shooting out part of our supply chain might not have been the smartest move,” he says with a chuckle. “Doug. What a fucking douche. Have you seen his mustache? Looks fucking pervy.”

“Hm, yes. No one said they were smart, and no one said Douglas wasn’t a perv.”

“You’re telling me,” he says with a wide grin. “How long have they been trying to move their business over to the designer drug side of things?” He snorts and then waggles his eyebrows at me. “The fun side, I mean.”

“For over a year now. Ever since weed sales have declined because of decriminalization. They need to find a way to boost their revenue. And we’ve cornered the market in this part of the country.”

“Hell yeah, you have. My man.” He holds out his fist to bump mine but then drops it when he realizes I’ll do no such thing.

I eye my friend and run a hand across my jaw. “And since we took out the people at their bar, they now have a personal vendetta.”

“Guess so. Seems they’re not the smartest cookies either.”

“No, not at all. They’re sloppy, but relentless. Like bugs.”

“Ugh. I hate fucking bugs. Especially spiders. Wanna kill them all.”

He shudders and then holds up his gun, pretending to shoot at the floor.

“Put your gun down,” Viktor bites out from the front seat, and Luca grins.

“Aw, baby, don’t be mad. Not everyone can have a bodyguard like you to kill those creepy little fuckers for me. And you look so damn good when you do it too.”

Viktor scoffs, his eyes meeting mine in the rearview mirror. I can see the flush on his cheeks, and I file that away for later. I had no idea Viktor killed spiders for Luca.

Fucking ridiculous.

Luca grabs a cigarette from his pants pocket and lights it up, blowing it from the corner of his mouth.

“Nothing like cocaine and cigarettes, amiright? Especially after that shootout. Got my blood pumping.”

Viktor rolls his eyes and then moves his gaze back to the road.

“So, who do you think the mole is?” Luca asks.

“No fucking clue. But we’ll be on the lookout.”

“Yeah, good plan. Want me to look at hiring more people to man the properties?”

“Yes.”

“And what about the house?”

“We should be fine, but then again, we’ll have to see how they retaliate.”

“Want to risk it?”

“I don’t want them to think we’re afraid,” I reply and then fiddle with the ring on my finger, spinning it around and around. “I don’t want them to think they’ve gotten to me.”

“Yeah, don’t want them to think you’re running scared. Maybe we should have Bane send them a little present.”

I eye my friend and nod. “Have him do that. Let him pick.”

Luca grins and pats my shoulder. “Will do, Boss. Will do.”

---

When I finally get home, I’m still riding the high of the cocaine. My veins are zinging with the after effects. I’m exhausted, but the adrenaline rush is keeping me going. I make my way to Doc’s office on my property, letting him clean and stitch me up, placing a waterproof bandage on over the wound on my arm.

He eyes me sadly when Luca relays what happened.

He’s made visits to my workers, he knows some of them personally.

I can see the fire in his serious eyes before I finally make my way out and back toward the house.

Luca and I will discuss more in detail how to proceed from here, after the drugs have left our bodies.

I need a shower before I can do any such thing.

My feet carry me across the lawn to the front door, and I see Tatum sitting on the porch, a book near him, a laptop on his thighs.

His eyes sweep over me, taking in my exposed torso and the blood which has dried on my arm.

The laptop snaps shut, and he pushes himself to his feet.

“Oh my god, what happened to you?” he asks, moving toward me. His hands press against my chest, and I feel the zing of his touch all the way to my toes.

Or maybe that’s the cocaine.

I’m not sure.

“You’re bleeding.”

“I’m stitched up,” I say as he removes the ruined shirt from my shoulder and stares at the patch on my arm.

“Why the hell are you stitched up?” he asks, his eyes meeting mine.

I feel my heart pounding in my chest, galloping out of control.

I need fucking control.

With a blink, I step around him, letting his hands fall from me, and stalk toward the stairs. I really need a fucking shower and a nap.

In that order.

No Tatum. None.

But if I thought walking away would stop him, I was wrong. He follows me, huffing and puffing as he tries to meet my strides.

“Honestly, slow down, daddy long legs. Jesus,” he says as he follows me into my room. He doesn’t even hesitate, doesn’t ask, but then again, why did I think he would? Nothing’s ever stopped him before.

“You need to leave,” I say as I move toward the bathroom and flip on the water.

He eyes me, pursing his lips.

“No thank you. I’m going to supervise and make sure you’re safe. It’s obvious you lost a lot of blood. You could faint.”

He waves his hands all around and then lets them flop to his sides, placing them on his hips and looking out into the main room.

“And then when you’re safe, I’m going to snoop. Because I’m going to be honest, Anthony. I’ve been dying to look in your room.”

I unbutton my pants and pull the zipper down, making Tatum’s eyes flash down to my crotch. He swallows and shamelessly adjusts his hardening cock.

“I’d like my privacy.”

“Tough tits, big man. I’m not leaving.”

And instead of leaving, he moves toward me, helping me drag my pants down my thighs.

“Careful. There’s brain on my shoes.”

Tatum glances up at me and purses his lips. “Seems I may need a shower then too.”

He unlaces my shoes and helps me take them off, as well as my socks and pants. My underwear is last. The way he drags his fingers across my skin as he pulls them from me makes that switch inside of me slip up just a little.

“There,” he says, pushing himself up, breathless. “Good to go.”

I eye him, my chest squeezing slightly. He’s still dressed, but his cheeks are flushed, his lips slightly wet and red from where he’s bitten them. I shouldn’t look so long and hard, but I can’t help it. It’s the drugs. My senses are heightened, that switch sitting precariously between on and off.

My dick twitches between my legs.

I turn and move toward the steaming shower, stepping beneath the spray and letting the heat of it pierce my skin.

His eyes are on me, I can feel it, the way he devours me with his gaze. I lift my hand to the edge of the shower, grabbing on to the lip where the tile meets the wall. My head leans back, my eyes closing as I let the stream of water hit my chest and roll down my legs.

I try not to think about him out there, watching me.

I’ve never wanted another man, never thought that I’d want to touch one, consume one.

And yet, here I am, wanting to swallow the entirety of him.

“Seriously, what happened today?” he says, moving into the shower behind me. My eyes swivel in my head, lids still closed, trying to even out my breathing. A mere puff and that switch will be flipped.

And who knows what that will mean.

“Really, though, why were you bleeding?” he asks as he takes a step closer to me, his hands brushing along my shoulders. “God, you’re built,” he whispers, a teasing sound that fumbles around in my chest and settles somewhere below my stomach.

Somewhere it shouldn’t.

I feel the tip of his dick hit my ass, and my eyes pop open.

My head twists over my shoulder, and I stare at him, watching as his eyes reverently move across my body. Roaming, searching.

He doesn't stop until he's panting.

"I'll wash you," he says, his words just whispers. His tongue peeks from between his lips and he licks them. Pink. Plump. Wet.

He reaches around me, his nose bumping into my armpit, and I hear him inhale.

"Oops," he says and stands up, the squirt of the soap into his palm making my entire body thrum.

I will not flip. Will. Not.

The electric current zips through me as he drags his hands across my back and into my hair. I don't let my eyes close though, I don't let myself feel.

And yet, I feel *everything*.

"Turn around, Boss-man," he says. With a jerk of his hands on my waist, I move, turning to face him. He lets out a low groan and looks forlornly at his dick.

"Sorry," he says to it. "You're getting no action today."

His eyes flash up to mine, and I stare at him, not giving him any hints.

He nods and swallows. "Right."

He reaches past me again and grabs the soap before standing and running those soft hands across my chest, spending far too long on my nipples. And then he moves down my arms, first the one that's injured, carefully skipping past the bandage before threading his soapy fingers between mine.

For a second, it feels like he's holding my hand, but then a moment later, it's just a wisp of memory as he moves on to the other arm and does the same thing, dragging my heart right along with him.

When he gets to my waist, he kneels and starts to work on soaping up my legs. He's methodical, washing every muscle with careful consideration. His head brushes against my semi-hard cock, and the feel of his soft silver hair against me makes something flash through me. A shock, a jolt to my system.

I shouldn't look down, and yet even as I think it, my hand threads through his silky hair and tugs.

He gasps, his eyes flashing up to meet mine, his lips parting wantonly.

“Anthony, do *not* tease me,” he whispers, and I feel that flash again, blinding me. “My dick is already at its wits’ end...”

I tug his head toward my dick and feel it perk up when he breathes against it.

A low moan echoes through my skin and settles in my balls. I feel them clench and fill, feel my cock come alive.

It hardens and thickens against his cheek and mouth, and I feel his lips trail across it as it does. I can feel him breathe on me, lick, suck until I’m fully erect and throbbing.

“Oh my god,” he says, his words being washed away down the drain.

I stare at him, mouthing my dick, not sucking me down his throat, but just tasting me. He moves from my side to underneath, to pulling my balls into his mouth and rolling them around his tongue.

He’s good at this, better than he should be.

Anger roils inside of me, possessiveness, a threat to unknown men who have had this as well.

No one should have this but me.

My balls fall from his mouth, and he kisses and licks his way to my tip, his knees moving him directly in front of me, kneeling, submissive, and yet, I know he’s anything but.

My fingers tighten in his hair for a second before I release him completely, moving my arm up to grab on to the side of the glass shower wall. I stand there, my legs parted, my arms holding me upright, my dick straining out in front of me.

Tatum’s eyes hold mine for a minute, waiting, wanting.

Permission.

I don’t say anything, just watch as he presses his lips to my tip, his tongue snaking out and licking across my slit. A low moan escapes him, as if this is the best thing he’s ever tasted, as if this is his dream come true.

When he falls onto my dick, I feel that switch flip completely.

And I’m lost.

# 8

## TATUM

I can't believe I'm sucking his dick. His big, long, thick dick. My lips stretch across his length as I bring him into the back of my throat, far too turned on to even gag. I just grab on to his ass cheeks, one hand on each strong, muscular globe, and pull him down my throat.

My eyes never leave his, never wanting to miss a beat of it, of how he's feeling.

And even now, I can't tell what's going on inside that mind of his. He's just watching me, his strong, tattooed arms stretched out, holding on to the sides of the shower as he lets me take him.

Fuck, I don't even know if he likes it.

His nostrils flare as he watches me, his cheeks turning a darker shade of red. And the fact that he's letting me do this... He could easily stop me.

But he doesn't.

He just watches as I suck him eagerly, trying my best to get him to bend, to get him to snap. But he's unbreakable.

His chest rises and falls, his wet hair falling into his face as I swirl my tongue along the vein under his cock, feeling it throb against me. His dick twitches in my mouth and he lets out a puff of air above me.

The fact is, he's hard. For me.

It's enough to keep me going.

I slurp and gag as I continue to pull him into me, my fingers flexing on his hard ass cheeks, loving that I get to see him like this. Naked, spread out, letting me use him.

My cock is unbearably hard at the sight, all my fantasies just standing before me, the taste of him exploding on my tongue.

With one hand, I reach down and tug at my cock, my eyes rolling back in my head at the sensation pulsing through me. Bliss, pure and utter horny bliss.

And then suddenly, it stops.

Anthony pulls away, his cock dragging from my swollen lips, leaving my entire body frozen in place. Even my hand stops its shuttling.

I blink up at him, the water rolling down his muscular, tattooed chest.

“What?” I ask, that word just a rasp of a broken syllable.

His lips stretch into a narrow line and then he reaches down and pulls me up, my body still trembling from the lack of release, from the impending orgasm that hasn’t yet come. I try to stand, my legs shaking, my body flushed with desire.

“Get out,” he says, and I can do nothing but shake my head, unable to move. He’s going to have to carry me if he wants me to leave.

“Tatum.” It’s a warning, and all I can do is swallow.

“You can’t tease me like this,” I whine, my hands settling on his chest, feeling the rapid way his heart is beating, tracing the script there, the names of his children surrounded by swirls and roses.

He may want me to leave, but he enjoyed it.

He did. I can tell.

“Get. Out.”

I sigh and take a step back, nearly slipping as I do. His hands come around me, pulling me roughly into his chest, our bodies now completely flush with one another. I can feel every part of him. The hair on his legs, the feel of his softening dick against mine, the bulge of his biceps.

“Careful,” he whispers.

Oh god. I can’t be careful. Not around him. I want to slip and fall right onto his dick.

But instead of saying that, I nod, trying to step back, but he just grabs on to my ass and lifts me, walking us both out of the shower, completely naked and dripping wet.

If he thought this would deter me, it’s only made me hornier.

To be lifted by a mafia man, from the shower, completely naked.  
God have mercy on my tortured soul.

He gently sets me down on my feet and reaches for a towel hanging on a rack, handing it to me. But it slips through my shaking fingers, and I stare at it puddled on the ground.

“You’re helpless, aren’t you?” he says as he spins me around, my back against his chest. I stare up at him through the mirror, noticing the way that his wet hair drips droplets down the side of his face and onto his shoulders. He looks like he’s come undone.

And yet, so put together, so stoic.  
Like the mob boss he is.

“I am. Unlike you, I can’t just stop mid-blown job.”

His eyes meet mine and his finger drags down my chest to my stomach, settling right at the base of my cock.

“You need to learn to have some control.”

“I am the most controlled. You have no idea.”

He scoffs and then his hand wraps around my dick.

“I know what you’re doing,” he whispers, his lips brushing against my ear and setting my entire body on fire. Couple that with the way he’s stroking my dick and the fact that I can see this all in the mirror, and I won’t last long.

“What?” I breathe, leaning back against him, watching this all unfold in front of me.

“You’re trying to seduce me.”

I gasp and then groan when his wrist twists around my cock, making me buck my hips up.

“But, Tatum, I’ll have you know that even that sassy, wet mouth of yours won’t be able to do that.”

I reach back and grab on to his head, threading my fingers through his hair.

“But I had you. For a minute, I did.”

He drags his teeth along my jaw, and I moan loudly, trying to stay quiet, but ultimately unable to. The visual alone is too much.

“You’ll never have me,” he says and then bites down on my ear as my cock explodes. My entire body trembles, my scream broken as I try to inhale air that I desperately need.

And when I come down, he just holds me in his arms, his eyes narrow and dark, watching me with a fierceness that I can't explain. I don't even know what any of it means.

"Oh god," I moan, releasing his hair from my fist and clutching his forearm to steady myself.

"Now," Anthony says, "Now you can get dressed and get out of my room."

I manage a small eye roll and step away from him, grabbing the hand towel on the bathroom sink and wiping myself up. Anthony sighs when he sees what I'm doing, but if I bend over to get the bath towel on the floor, I will probably pass out and die.

The entire room is spinning from my orgasm, so I lean forward and drink some water from the tap, getting my cheeks wet and some up my nose in the process. God, I am so unsexy, it's not even funny.

"I really need to lie down," I say, feeling lightheaded.

I shuffle out of the room and face plant onto his bed. Oh fuck, the sheets smell like him. Masculine. Toxic. Dangerous.

All the things I seem to love and crave.

"Tatum."

Anthony is aggravated, I can tell by the tone of his voice, but I'm not moving from my spot until I can breathe again. He really needs to stop giving me hand jobs. I really need to find someone to fuck me in the ass. Hard.

This is unhealthy.

I know it, and yet I can't stop myself.

I hear a sigh and then drawers opening and closing behind me. Clothes rustle, and I know he's getting dressed while I'm ass-naked on the bed, still unmoving.

A knock on the door and the sound of it opening has me twisting my gaze to see who it is.

"Luca," Anthony says, and then I hear footsteps moving toward me.

I should cover myself up, but I can't quite make myself care. Blowing a major load does that to people.

Well, to me.

I watch as Luca stops in front of me, wearing sexy gray sweatpants and a white shirt. Good Lord, that is something I'd love to see Anthony in.

“Ah, see you’ve been busy, Boss,” Luca replies with a smile and then starts to reach out toward me but is waylaid by Anthony. His hand wraps around the front of Luca’s neck, and he backs his friend right out of the room. The door clicks closed, and I turn my face back into the sheets.

I’ll leave in a second.

Totally will get up and go.

Blackness envelops me before I can think another thought.

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I wake up to the sound of someone walking toward me. My mind is still groggy with sleep, my eyes too tired to open. It’s too much effort, so I keep them closed. I’m still naked on the bed, my body stretched out on the cool sheets. My cock perks up at the presence in the room.

It has to be Anthony. He’s come back to me. He’s going to frown and tell me in his grumpy voice that I need to leave, but god, I don’t wanna.

I want to stay right here.

Everything smells like him. Everything is him.

If I only have one life to live, I want to be buried right here.

I turn over onto my back and reach my arms above my head in a languid stretch, still feeling slightly fuzzy and half-asleep. Maybe he’ll see my hard dick and touch it again.

Oh, please let him touch it again.

I want him to wrap his strong fingers around my cock and strangle it.

I bet he’s good at strangling.

He could suck the life right out of it.

“Hm,” a deep voice rumbles, and I sigh as pleasure zips through me.

It’s him. Anthony. He’s here.

“You’re quite the snack.”

I let out a shaky exhale at the term of endearment, feeling my lips turn up at the corners. I mean, I am quite delicious. I’m glad that Anthony’s noticed.

The bed dips at my side as he crawls toward me. The movements aren’t as fluid, a little more jerky and chaotic, but still. He’s crawling toward me.

Me.

I inhale and realize that he smells different, sweeter. Like cherries. But that's fine with me. I'll take that man any way I can get.

"Like a delicious cinnamon roll," he murmurs and his tongue slides up my chest. His teeth bite roughly at my skin, almost like he's trying to eat me.

My fingers tangle in his hair as I let out a small whimper. That kinda hurts.

I yank and the teeth slip from my skin, and I feel my hand flex in longer, thicker hair.

That's...different.

A body moves onto mine, clothed and yet leaner, not as muscular.

My hands slide down his back as firm lips suck a mark on to my neck. And even though at this moment I'm not entirely sure this is Anthony, I want it to be. I want to live in this dream a little longer.

I arch my body into the touch and cant my hips up against a swollen dick.

Oh fuck, yes.

Yes.

"What's your name?" the voice asks, and it's then that my mind can no longer pretend.

My eyes slowly flutter open, and I see a man I don't recognize hovering above me. It's the wrong body, the wrong color hair. Even the wrong scent.

Anthony would never smell like cherries.

My fingers move up to the long hair and I tug roughly, which only makes the man above me moan.

"That's right. Mm. I like it rough."

I let out a huff of laughter and try to wiggle out from under him, but he's stronger than me.

"Seriously. Let me go," I command, for some reason not feeling as afraid as I should. Maybe it's the fact that Anthony will have someone's head if they hurt me in any way. And I assume that's the case for whoever is grinding against my hard dick right now.

Sue me. I really wanted it to be Anthony.

Dark eyes blink down at me, red puffy lips set in a grin, and I see a chipped front tooth wink at me.

I don't recognize him and yet he's beautiful in his own eerie way.

“I’ll let you go when you tell me your name,” he says, and I tug on his hair a little more, making his eyes roll back in his head.

“Tell me yours first.”

“My little snack has a spine. Well, I’m Bane, at your very horny service.”

I snort a small laugh when I realize who this is. I didn’t realize Bane was such a hottie.

“I’m Tatum. I’ve heard all about you. Been dying to meet you actually.”

Bane blinks down at me and then rolls to the side, staring up at the ceiling, a chuckle slipping from his lips.

“Oh fuck,” he mutters. “You’re Anthony’s Tatum, aren’t you?”

I lean up on my side and glance over at him. “No. I’m no one’s. And especially not Anthony’s.”

Bane eyes me and then turns his entire body to face me, a finger reaching out and trailing down my arm.

“That’s not what he says, which is such a shame. You have nice veins.”

I grin at him and then wiggle a little closer. “Thank you. That’s so nice.”

“I am the best at compliments.”

I meet his gaze and ask, “Why didn’t they want me to meet you?”

He snatches his finger away and shrugs. “I don’t know. I’m a delight.”

“Anthony was very adamant about keeping me away from you.”

“Probably because of what I do for him.”

“And what do you do?” I ask as I reach out and poke at his chest. Yep, he’s real. This isn’t some weird, fucked-up dream. This is Bane.

In all his glory.

He grabs on to my finger and brings it to his mouth, sucking it between his lips, his tongue rolling around the tip like a lollipop before it pops from his lips.

“Mm. You taste real good.”

I wipe my finger on the sheets between us. “You sound hungry.”

“Yeah. It’s been a while. Been busy.”

We grin at each other, like old friends, and then I push myself up so I’m seated next to him.

“How did you get in here?” I ask, and Bane grins wider as he hops up and adjusts his still-hard dick. He’s wearing torn jeans and a t-shirt that says *Someday I’ll Be Dead*.

“A secret passage. Wanna see?”

I jump up, slightly lightheaded from the quick movement. But fuck, I'm excited. I've never been in a secret passageway before.

"Hell yes, I wanna see," I say, trying to remember where I left my clothes. Everything from earlier is a bit of a blur.

"Okay, but you can't tell the boss I took you."

I peer back at Bane as I make my way to the bathroom and nod excitedly. "I'd never say a word. It's our little secret."

"You sure? You seem like you'd cave if he put his tongue up your asshole."

I hesitate at that. Because it's true. I probably would.

"Ah, I knew it. You'll cave."

"I won't. I promise. Plus, I really wanna see. Please."

Bane hesitates for just a second before he grabs something from the end table. Upon closer inspection, I see that it's a glass jar full of eyeballs. They roll around in the clear liquid, the tendons and veins still attached to some.

Honestly, I should be more afraid than I am. But, *secret passageway. Bane.*

I'm a sucker for the intrigue.

"Why do you have a jar of eyeballs?" I shout from the bathroom as I pull my pants and t-shirt on.

I don't know where my underwear ended up, but I don't care to look for them. There's no time. I don't want Bane to change his mind. He seems... chaotic. He could disappear and I'd be left wondering what lies below this house.

My eyes hit my reflection in the mirror and I see the gigantic mark on my neck. *Oh hell*, I think as I pull the neck of my shirt down and see teeth marks lining my skin as well.

Well, that's not good.

I'm going to need some of Agatha's cream to help that shit heal.

"I have a really big collection, would you like to see it?" Bane asks excitedly from the other side of the room, and I feel my heart thunder in my chest.

I should not say yes. I should back away slowly.

"Hell yes, I want to see it!" I say as I nearly run out of the bathroom, just as Bane presses something on the wall and a door pops open out of nowhere. I gasp and then press a hand over my mouth in excitement. Why

hasn't Angel told me about these secret passageways in the house? I swear, this is not something you hide from a friend.

This is amazing.

This is something I need to see, to experience.

Bane steps inside the darkness without a light, and for the first time since meeting him, I feel trepidation slither up my spine.

"Um, Bane? You're not going to kill me, right?" I ask, and Bane chuckles.

"No. Not unless Anthony asks me to. Then, I'm sorry, but it's game over for you."

I roll my lips between my teeth and then nod. Yep. Not going to turn around now.

"Good enough for me."

"Come on, little snack," he says as he snakes an arm around me to keep me from getting lost. He deftly directs me down a set of stairs and through the dark tunnels without any hesitation.

"You must be down here a lot," I say, and Bane hums. "That's really cool, but a little creepy."

"Never said I wasn't," he says, and then in the distance, I make out some low lights flickering ominously. But thank God for the illumination.

I was starting to feel a bit claustrophobic.

"So, when were these created? I mean, like who dug these out? And do they go like everywhere? Is there a tunnel that leads outside the gates?" I ask, slightly breathless.

"How about a kiss for every answer I give you?"

I snort and glance up at Bane, who is still cradling the eyeballs in his arm. He looks a little more unhinged in the low lights, and that fear I experienced before walking into these tunnels with him returns.

He could kill me and no one would ever find me. I'm sure of it.

"I mean, can I bargain with you? Or is this the only way?"

Bane shrugs. "It's the only way. I don't bargain."

I eye him. I really want my questions answered. And Anthony isn't here to stop him.

"Fine."

"Really?"

I laugh at how surprised he seems. "Yeah, it's a deal."

“Fuck yeah,” he says, pumping his arm up and down, the one with the jar of eyeballs. They bounce around in their container, some hitting the glass and peering at me, unseeing. “But no telling Anthony. I mean it. I like my lips. I don’t want them lopped off.”

I pretend to consider it. I mean, Anthony doesn’t really want me. He doesn’t care about me. Why not a kiss for a little truth? It won’t hurt anyone, and Bane was a very good kisser. In a creepy, *I want to eat you while you’re still alive* kind of way.

“Okay. Fine. You have a deal. My lips are sealed.”

Bane grins at me and then backs me into the wall, his lean, muscled body pressed against mine, the eyeballs jiggling in their confines against my side.

My eyelids flutter closed, but then pop back open again, watching as Bane lowers his lips to mine in a gentle, chaste kiss.

I was not expecting that.

I was expecting something more along the lines of earlier. Rough and rude.

This was almost...sweet.

“I mean it. You taste real nice,” he says, his eyes meeting mine. I feel my heart stutter in my chest and my breathing grow ragged. I really didn’t expect this. Not at all. Suddenly, I feel like I shouldn’t have come down here.

It’s almost like he’s courting me. Maybe the eyeballs are a wedding gift.

Before I can start to panic, Bane pushes away from me and starts moving forward once more, weaving through the narrow walkways. “These tunnels were built about twenty-five years ago, when the boss bought this land. It was the first thing he did. Not many people know about them and you sure shouldn’t be down here.”

“And yet, here I am,” I say.

“Seems you got lucky tonight. And yes, there is a tunnel that leads outside the gate. But that is top secret.”

He waggles his eyebrows at me as he turns right and unlocks a door with a key card. It beeps, and he pushes it open. “After you,” he says, and my nervous legs slip through.

Bane follows me and the door snicks closed behind us.

“So, what are these tunnels for?” I ask when we start moving again. Bane stops walking and gently grabs the back of my head, pulling me in for

a rougher kiss. My lips sting slightly from it, but he doesn't linger. No, he just turns and continues to move down the dimly lit hallways.

"It's how we get information. It's my specialty, really."

He turns right and then I'm led into a large room. There are no windows, just roughly carved walls and flickering lights.

"It's quiet in here today," he says with a hum. "Usually it's quite loud."

My eyebrows rise as the smell of bleach hits my nostrils. This entire thing should make me more afraid than I am, and for a moment, I wonder what's wrong with me.

Something is seriously wrong with me.

I am not entirely normal.

"Hey, you wanna see my office?" he asks, almost bouncing on his toes.

I nod wordlessly as he takes me past several open doors. I can't help but look inside.

Good fuck, is that blood on the walls? Seems so.

And yet, I'm not surprised.

This is what Anthony's been keeping a secret.

God, what else is hidden down here?

"Bodies," Bane replies to my words spoken out loud as he pulls another door open. "Hundreds of them."

I shiver as I follow him inside, my eyes taking in the brightly painted space, every wall a different color. On two walls are rows of shelves and on them are stacks of jars filled with things.

Fingers. Toes. More eyeballs.

"That's, um, quite a collection," I say, trying to find the words for what I'm experiencing. This doesn't even seem real. And yet, here I am.

Bane saunters over to a shelf and taps a glass jar. "Yeah, it is. And look, knee caps."

"Hm. Wow," I say with a nod and then watch as he opens a long cupboard. Tools are hanging on hooks, and I can only imagine what they are for.

Oh god, what the hell am I doing here?

"Those are...nice."

"They are. And very useful. I wish I could show you these in action."

I'm not sure I'd want to see that. But then again, if Anthony asked me if I'd like to see him using one of those then maybe I'd say yes.

I don't fucking know anymore.

I glance over at Bane, who is watching me intently.

“So, were the guys who hurt me down here?”

Bane giggles as he closes the cabinet door and nods. “Oh, they sure were.”

He moves toward me and presses a kiss to my cheek, licking his way to my ear. “They were so very loud. So very scared. I gave it to them good. You don’t need to worry. I took care of them for you.”

I swallow and lean back, moving around the room, taking in all the body parts glaring back at me.

I could end up in one of those if I do the wrong thing.

For the first time since meeting Anthony, I realize how dangerous he really is.

Oh, who am I kidding? It only makes me hotter for him.

I need major therapy at this point.

“Wanna know a secret? We’re going to war because of you,” Bane says, sneaking up behind me and running a finger across the pounding vein in my neck. “People are gonna die.” I glance up at him, and he winks at me. “You could die.”

The air is thick between us, and I feel my lungs try to pull in air, but it’s a struggle. War? What the fuck does he mean?

“I don’t understand.”

But Bane is already moving away from me. “That’s all I can say. Come on. Let’s get you back or Anthony is gonna have my head or my eyelids. Although, tongues are his favorite.”

I run a hand across the back of my neck as I follow him out of his office, past the dungeon with the empty, bleach-filled rooms and down another dimly lit tunnel.

“I’m gonna sneak you right into the garden. Remember, this is our little secret.”

I nod, grabbing on to his arm as the lights flicker out. It’s so dark, I don’t even know where I’m going, but Bane walks assuredly on, not even hesitating.

A moment later, I’m tripping up some stairs and then I hear hinges squeak.

Moonlight, stars, and fresh air greet me.

“Here we are...after you, my little snack.”

And then an inhale of breath and Bane sighs, “Oh fuck.”

My eyes adjust and right there, waiting by the exit, is Anthony.

---

He's furious. I can see it in the way his jaw pops, the way his eyes narrow.

Bane is shifting around beside me, a nervous energy radiating off him.

"How the hell did he end up with you?" Anthony asks, and I'm not entirely sure who he's asking the question to. So neither of us answers.

"Bane?" Anthony asks just as the moon peeks from behind a cloud. Anthony's eyes slip down my face to my neck and his nostrils flare.

Oh hell.

Bane laughs nervously and then smacks his lips together. "Um, hey, Boss. Gotta run!"

Suddenly, I'm shoved forward, right into Anthony's arms and the door behind me closes with a bang.

"Want me to go after him?" Viktor asks, but Anthony just shakes his head, pulling me up against his chest.

"No. We'll never find him."

I peer up at Anthony, and his hand moves up to my neck, brushing over the bruise that Bane sucked onto my skin.

"Did he hurt you?"

"No," I breathe, his touch lighting a fire within me. "He was a gentleman."

"I don't think he was."

I meet his gaze, and his eye twitches. "To be fair, I thought he was you at first."

His fingers tighten on my waist. "And what's his excuse?"

"No idea. But I'm pretty sure he was trying to eat me."

Anthony lets out a huff and turns his gaze away, his fingers suddenly leaving me.

"Teddy, bring him back to the house and don't let him out of your sight again."

I turn and see my bodyguard frowning at me. Oh hell, did he get into trouble over this?

Shit.

"Wait, Anthony. This isn't Teddy's fault."

“Isn’t it? He was put in charge of you and he lost you. It seems he *is* responsible.”

I purse my lips and place my hands on my hips. “It is *not*. He couldn’t have known where I went! Bane came in through a secret door. In your room.”

Anthony’s eye twitches again and then he starts striding away.

“Ugh, listen. If anyone’s to blame, it’s you. I mean, how could I resist that? A secret door, Anthony. *A secret door!*”

I moan in frustration and then jog to catch up with him. His strides are long and purposeful, and I’m winded by the time he makes it to the porch. God, I need to start working out again. That beat-down really took it out of me.

“Teddy will see you to your room.”

I roll my eyes and then continue to follow him into the house.

“Oh, no you don’t. You can’t just put me in my room like a child.”

“When you behave like one, I can.”

I huff in annoyance and traipse after him, pushing past Teddy’s wide form to get into Anthony’s office before he shuts and locks it on me.

I narrowly avoid those big arms coming around to grab me, but Teddy’s a little too slow and I’m far too motivated.

“Anthony. You don’t understand. Bane showed me a secret passageway. I couldn’t say no.”

Anthony moves toward the table with the drinks on it and pours himself a stiff one.

“Honestly, Anthony. Put the drink down and talk to me, man to man.”

“Are you a man, though? Seems you behave like a child.”

I roll my eyes and then bite down on my bottom lip at the realization of what I just did.

I *am* acting childish.

“Listen, it wasn’t the smartest, especially considering he had a jar of eyeballs with him, but listen... You show me a secret door and a secret passageway, and I’m going in. I’m telling you, I’ll die in there, but I’m going in.”

He takes a gulp of his drink and sets it down, the ice clinking loudly.

“Tatum. I’ll say this once and never again. You’re never to associate with Bane. And he’s not to put his mouth anywhere on you.”

I sigh and then nod. “Okay. But if he’s not allowed to put his mouth anywhere near me, will you?”

His hand slides across his jaw, his eyes narrowing. “Why would I when Bane has been all over you? You even smell like him.”

The possessive, angry way he says that makes my cock harden again. This really is becoming a problem. Seems like I like to rile Anthony up. I like him being possessive over me.

I really fucking like it. Crave it.

“Oh, I guess I do. Would you like me to fix that?” I ask, batting my eyelashes like a brat. “I could be persuaded to shower, if you blame me entirely for sneaking into your underground tunnels with the scary, yet hot Bane and not Teddy, the very loyal bodyguard.”

His jaw ticks again, and I can’t help myself. I promised I wouldn’t breathe a word but I do it anyways. “He kissed me, you know. Bargained for it.”

Anthony’s nostrils flare.

“But it doesn’t matter,” I say with a wave of my hand. “You’re not gay, right? He can kiss me all he wants.”

Anthony stalks toward me angrily, his fists flexing near his sides. He comes to a stop before me and stares down at me.

“No one kisses you. No one touches you.”

Coyly, I blink up at him. “No one but you?”

He grinds his teeth together and doesn’t respond. His eyes trail to my lips though, and I suddenly can’t breathe. Good fuck, where did all the air go?

“You want me to kiss you?” he rasps, his voice dangerously low. His hand comes up and cups my jaw roughly, his thumb sliding across my bottom lip.

“Mhm,” is all I can manage to reply.

He leans down toward me and inhales, his nose wrinkling up.

“You smell like him. I won’t touch you like this.”

I let out a shudder and whimper when he clasps my face tighter, his nails digging in my skin. And then suddenly his hand is gone, leaving me nearly weeping from pent-up need.

“Go shower and meet me in my room. I have to apply the ointment.”

I sigh and palm my hard dick. “Fine.”

I should argue, should push him a little more, but I can't think. He's sucked all the bratty comments from my head.

When I don't move fast enough, Anthony grabs the nape of my neck and walks me to the door. "Teddy," he says. "You stay with him in my room until I come up."

Teddy nods solemnly, looking a little chastised, and then Anthony shuts the door behind us with a click.

I stare at the ornate wood frame and reach down and adjust my hard dick with a long sigh.

"This is just getting sad," I tell myself and Teddy, who is glowering at me. "And I really am sorry. I had no idea you were supposed to watch over me. No one tells me anything," I say with a pout. Teddy doesn't respond, but I don't expect him to. I know he doesn't speak. At least to me.

We make our way up the stairs and down the hallway toward Anthony's room when suddenly, a door is thrown open and Angel steps out, looking slightly flushed.

"Oh, oh hi," he says, looking suddenly shy. "Where have you been?"

I eye him and then fold my arms across my chest. "Me? Where have *you* been?" I counter. I haven't seen him all day. And he was suspiciously absent during dinner.

Angel's cheeks flush even more, and he smooths his hair back from his face.

"Nowhere. I've been in my room." He has a cobweb on his shirt, and I brush it away. Hm, seems he's been somewhere he shouldn't have been.

He looks slightly guilty for lying to me, but I don't have the energy to push him. Not right now. Maybe later, after I've blown a load, I'll feel more up to it.

"Alright. Well, I'm going to go shower," I say, moving toward Anthony's door.

"In my dad's room?" he calls out, and I shrug.

"What can I say? He's a control freak," I explain, and Angel lets out a small laugh. When I glance over my shoulder, he's skipping down the hall happily. Well, thank fuck for that. I didn't want to have to explain what's going on between Anthony and me. Not that I could explain. I literally have no idea what's happening. Just that he has given me some hand jobs and seems far too possessive over me for a straight guy.

I move into the bedroom, Teddy hot on my heels.

“Gonna go shower,” I tell him as I walk into the bathroom and strip out of my clothes. I wash quickly, pausing only to smell the body wash that Anthony uses. God, it gets my dick hard. Not that I touch it, I don’t want Teddy to hear me jerking one off just on the other side of the wall.

So I am methodical about it—wash and rinse. When I step out, I shuffle through his drawers and grab some of his deodorant, spraying it on before grabbing his toothbrush and scrubbing at my teeth. I probably should have asked permission, but I don’t care. I just take what I want. He’ll never know.

I stride out into the bedroom, wearing only a towel and enter Anthony’s large walk-in closet. Everything is orderly and color-coordinated, even his socks and underwear are folded. It makes me want to mess it up, just a little. Maybe stick a shirt in the wrong place to see his eye twitch. But instead of pushing any more of his buttons tonight, since I’ve already pressed my luck, I just grab a shirt and pull it on, buttoning it up and rolling up the sleeves.

There. All done.

Now I just need to wait for Anthony.

I crawl into his bed and feel Teddy’s eyes on me. Probably on my bare ass which is assuredly sticking out right now. Good thing I waxed before I went to that shady bar. At least it’s nice and smooth.

As soon as I think that, the door opens and Anthony walks in. I freeze and turn my gaze over my shoulder.

Anthony’s eyes land on me and one of them twitches. Seems I got that response without messing up his closet.

Win. Win.

“You’re dismissed,” he tells Teddy, his eyes never leaving me.

“Hello there,” I say with a wide smile, turning around and sitting on top of his covers. He doesn’t return the greeting, just starts toward me, his fingers working his shirt open as he goes.

Oh my god. Why is he taking off his clothes? I can’t peel my eyes away from him, from each inch of his chest that he exposes to me. My mouth is suddenly too dry, parched. My tongue peeks out, and I wet my lips.

“You’re wearing my shirt,” he says, and I nod.

“Mhm,” I reply as he stops at the end of the bed and shucks his shirt off, tossing it onto a nearby chair.

I stare at his puckered nipples, at the tattoos across his chest. I want to lick him. I want to push him down, straddle his waist and slide my tongue across his body. Good hell, he's a sexpot. How am I going to make it out of here alive?

I'm not. I'm going to die from sexual frustration.

His fingers wrap around my ankle and he pulls me to the edge of the bed. My shirt slides up my thighs and bunches at my groin, my hard cock evident through the fabric. There's no hiding it, not that I want to. He knows that just looking at him makes me hard enough to hammer nails.

His fingers move to the buttons on the shirt, and he slips each one free until he's pushing the fabric off my shoulders. His fingers skim my skin, and when I'm completely naked, he leans down toward me, inhaling.

"Better," he says, and I bite back a moan.

Good fuck, he should not be saying this to me. He really shouldn't breathe in my direction. I may come untouched.

He picks up the jar from the end table and unscrews it, and then his fingers are on me, massaging the ointment into my skin and making me pant. I have no control.

Zero.

Really, like negative one-thousand. I'm so far past control, I'm just pure chaos.

When he reaches around me and flips me over, I rut discreetly into the mattress as his hands glide all over me, but I don't think I manage to do this unnoticed.

"Stop wiggling," he bites out, and I huff in annoyance.

"I can't."

"You can," he replies as he grips my hips and stills me.

I try my best to stop moving, I really do, but when his hands drag down the back of my thighs, I end up humping the bed frantically.

"Tatum," he grinds out, and I moan.

"Anthony. You aren't dense. You know what your hands on me does to my dick. I can't help it. I'm a horny boy, okay?"

He flips me over, my dick slapping my stomach as I stare up at him with wide eyes. His gaze dips down to my hard cock, and he rolls his lips between his teeth.

"Did you get hard with Bane?" he asks, an angry bite to his tone.

"When I thought it was you, I did."

He places his hand next to my head and leans toward me, his bare chest too erotic to not touch. I press my palms to his warm skin and drag my fingers down his pecs. His skin flushes around his neck, betraying his cool outward demeanor.

He likes it. Likes me touching him. Not that he'll ever admit it. He'd never do that.

His gaze meets mine before falling to my mouth.

"You're such a pretty little liar."

My fingers stop at the edge of his slacks and curl under the waistband.

"I'm not lying," I whisper. "I want what I can't have. It's an issue."

He blinks and edges slightly closer.

"And I can't have you, right? Because you're straight?" I add.

My hand drifts a little lower, rubbing against his dick, sadly still in his pants. It's soft against my hand, but god, what I wouldn't give to see it hard again. Feel it straining against my body, sliding over my tongue. Fucking my throat.

I peer up at Anthony, still hovering over me, not moving as I rub his dick through the fabric of his pants. I feel it start to lengthen, hardening between my fingers. The sensation causes me to let out a shaky exhale.

"You want this?" he asks, and I swallow and nod.

Of course I do. I fucking want it.

"Earn it," he bites out.

I don't know what that means, but I'm also not a quitter, so with shaky fingers, I unzip his pants and drag them down the curve of his ass. The feel of his muscles against my palms causes me to arch up into him, the friction of my oversensitive dick on his bare skin making me tremble.

My hands squeeze his flexing glutes as I drag his semi-hard dick against my own. I lean up, pressing my face against his neck and mouth at it, tasting the very essence of him.

Manly, rough, sex.

If I could bottle up his pheromones and keep them, I would. I'd inhale them daily. Like a drug.

I grind up against him, my cock rubbing frantically against his warm skin as I suck on his neck. I'm sure I'll leave a mark, just like Bane did to me. But before I can, he wraps his hand around the front of my neck and holds me down, his eyes flashing with something I don't recognize.

Something dangerous.

I feel my Adam's apple bob against the palm of his hand as he keeps me immobile, his dick slowly growing against my own.

"Please," I rasp, trying desperately to inhale air. "Tell me what you want."

He swallows and his eyes flash, but he doesn't respond.

"I'll—let me get you off. Please. I want you to fuck my throat. I want it."

He blinks and then he lets go of me, not moving as I wiggle down the bed until I'm right against his cock. I'm hanging off the bed, my back bowed awkwardly, but he doesn't assist me, just keeps himself propped up as I grab on to his ass and drag his cock into my mouth. If I thought that he was hard before, he wasn't. Not entirely. His cock continues to grow as I suck and sputter, my neck cramping as I awkwardly bob my head between his body and the mattress.

But he doesn't help make it easier, just lets me take his dick like the slut I apparently am. I'm gagging on him, my spit rolling down my chin and cheeks as I fight for his orgasm, trying to earn it. But he's immobile, not helping me at all.

That is until I drag the tip of my tongue along the underside of him. It's then that he arches his hips up slightly and starts to fuck my mouth.

His participation in this causes a groan to leave me, my fingers digging into his ass cheeks. My grip on him is the only thing keeping me where I am. If I didn't have a hold on his butt, I'd be on the floor.

A long exhale leaves Anthony, and the sound of it makes my entire body break out in goosebumps. Oh fuck. He likes it. I can tell. It's not overt, almost too silent, but that huff of air is so fucking delicious.

Precum hits my tastebuds as I continue to suck, letting him fuck my throat until I feel the pulse of his vein against my tongue. He's close. Not that I'd ever know it. He's infuriatingly silent the entire time, but the way his movements are slowly growing more chaotic, his breathing slightly labored, I know that he's close to coming.

I work him harder, hollowing my cheeks as I inhale him, pulling roughly on his hard dick until his hips cant up and he tunnels down my throat. He grunts twice and then I feel the salty, bitter taste of his cum filling my mouth, my throat, my stomach. He holds himself there before rocking into my mouth a few more times, emptying himself completely.

And then he goes still, his dick in my mouth, my throat bobbing around his softening length.

He pulls out of me slowly and my hands fall from his ass.

I sink to the floor when he pulls away from me, cum and spit still falling from my lips. I swipe at it, still feeling flushed and horny, but only manage to make more of a mess.

My body is shaking as I lean my head back against the mattress, my ass on the cold wood floor.

Anthony is sitting on the edge of the bed, completely silent, and I'm scared to look up at him to see any kind of disappointment.

I am a man after all, and he's adamantly not gay. But I sucked him off, drank his cum, and now I'm hard on the floor, trying desperately not to make more of a mess with my full balls and angry cock.

Anthony runs a hand across his jaw, I can hear it, and then suddenly stands and steps around me, moving toward the bathroom. I watch as he goes, that naked ass flexing as he disappears from view.

When he's gone, I reach down and grab on to my cock, shuttling my fist over it, trying desperately to get off before he returns, but I don't manage. I'm only able to bring myself right to the edge before he reappears. His gaze slashes to my cock and his eyes narrow.

"Get on the bed," he tells me roughly, and I scramble to do as he says, unable to even talk back at the moment. I'm too fucking gone. Too fucking close to orgasm to think.

"On your back," he says and then reaches for the lube in the end table drawer. He squirts it directly on my cock and then fists it, leaning over me as I groan and arch into him.

"Oh fuck. Yes," I say as I look down at his tattooed hand engulfing my cock. He's so strong, so capable. And here he is, getting me off. He's doing this for me.

"Tatum. Look at me," he commands, and my eyes flash to his face, taking in those dark orbs surrounded by thick lashes. Fuck, he's so hot. How did I get to be so lucky?

"Who do you belong to?"

I gasp at the question. He can't mean it. He can't fucking mean that.

"Um..." I say and grunt when he squeezes my dick unbearably hard.

"Who. Do you. Belong to?"

“You,” I whine, and he nods, squeezing my dick roughly and pumping it faster.

“Good boy.”

My eyes flutter closed at those words, and I moan as I fuck up into his hand.

“And who does this body belong to?” he asks, and I can’t help but breathe out, “You.”

*You. You.*

I’m still chanting it when I explode across my chest a few seconds later, my orgasm enveloping my entire body. I’m writhing beneath him, sweat rolling off my temples as I continue to fuck into him, drawing the wave of need out for as long as possible. And when the last bead of cum falls from my cock, I go limp, sagging into the mattress and gulping down air.

His fingers slip from my dick, one at a time, and I feel him wiping me up with tissues before he flicks the light off and settles down next to me. He’s not touching me, but I can feel his presence engulf me. That’s how he is. He’s overwhelming.

“Tatum,” he says, his voice a threat. “If anyone ever touches you again, I will cut them apart and bury them where no one can find them. Do you understand?”

I nod and then let out a croak. “Yes.”

“This is your only warning.”

I nod again and wet my lips. “But you’re not gay.”

“I’m not. But you’re mine. *Mine*. Now go the fuck to sleep.”

Ha, doesn’t he know? I don’t sleep. Can’t. I just stay awake until the sun comes up, those words chanting over and over again in my skull.

*Yours. Yours.*

*Mine.*

*Mine.*

# 9

## ANTHONY

My feet hit the treadmill at a grueling pace, sweat dripping down my forehead and neck. I just got done boxing with Luca and Viktor, and yet I still feel something crawling within me, wanting to escape.

I've lost my fucking mind.

My brain conjures up images from last night, flashes of Tatum grinding against me, his cheeks flushed in pleasure.

I let him suck my cock. And suck it he did.

Sucked my logic right out as well. And some of my straightness.

But fuck, he did it so well, and I woke up so relaxed.

Not so relaxed now though. An entire day spanning out before me, endless calls and paperwork. Everyone thinks the mafia is all about guns and sex workers, drugs and parties. No, it's just endless paperwork. Stacks of it.

It makes my head throb just thinking about it.

And then there's the issue of Angelo and Mikhail.

And the Fallen Aces coming for everything I've worked hard to build. This isn't the first time that they've tried this. But we've always dismissed them as a sloppy rival gang who was more of a nuisance than an actual threat. But after the shootout at the warehouse, I've been hearing of more attempts at other businesses I'm invested in. Break-ins, hacking, an attempted kidnapping.

Sloppy fuckers, especially now that Douglas Kennedy is in charge. He has some kind of point to prove, now that he's taken over.

They'll get what's coming to them. I'll make sure of it.

I slap the large red stop button on the machine and grab my water bottle, glugging the cool liquid down before mopping up my face.

“Fuck.”

I'm stressed all over again, it makes my muscles bunch tightly and my neck cramp.

My fingers rub at them, and I make a mental note to have a masseuse come by and work out the tension. Although, I don't know when I'll have time.

Tatum, however...

I shake that thought away for a second before it pops back in.

He did help me relieve some tension, and he liked doing it. He moaned and gagged, choked and sputtered, eager for it.

I shouldn't want it with him, but then again, I do seem to have a mild, slightly out of control obsession with Tatum.

I need to exorcise him from my system and yet...

I step off the treadmill and move to the weights, going through the reps before stepping into the sauna.

I have a shit-load to do today and a very important meeting with my consigliere, Clarence. My schedule can't accommodate Tatum and his sassy, wet mouth.

And yet, when I'm deep in a phone call with one of my business partners, Clarence sitting on the sofa, his laptop open, I feel my cock swell.

Seems the switch in my mind is malfunctioning.

Need to get that checked.

“Yes, I think moving this to another location would be key. We don't want the Feds getting wind of it,” I mutter as I grab on to my dick and squeeze. Fuck.

Seems it's not going down, which is an inconvenience and very unlike me.

I shift in my seat and try to pay attention, but I can't quite seem to keep myself focused.

That little shit.

He's done something to me.

Some kind of bratty magic. Fuck.

I huff in frustration at the state of myself, and Clarence's eyes meet mine. His brow crinkles and his graying eyebrows meet. He's probably never seen me like this. I'm always so calm and composed.

Well, I was until last night when I gave in and let Tatum slip down between my legs and inhale my dick right down his throat.

I shake my head and respond to another question that Donovan has asked me before reaching for my phone and tapping out a message to Teddy.

I've lost my fucking mind. I've gone and done it now.

But until that switch is fixed inside my brain there's nothing I can do but lean into it. Clarence won't judge me. He won't fucking look either if he wants to keep those eyes inside his head.

Ten minutes later, the phone call has ended, but I'm on another, this time with a politician. Senator Ruiz, a man who has his name in all the right places. I pay him and he makes sure that any issues I have with the law get put to rest quickly and without any trouble.

Yeah, the mafia isn't all about guns and shootouts. It's smarter than that now. It's strategic, political. It's all about who you know and who you pay. We get things done because of how we play the game.

Now the Fallen Aces, on the other hand, are sloppy. They run around guns blazing. It's why they'll eventually implode. Organizations like that never last.

They can't.

Clarence is silent, typing out notes on his computer as Senator Ruiz continues to talk about drafting legislation to decrease the import fees for certain businesses that I invest in, as well as making sure that certain fines and prison sentences are reduced for those in my employ caught selling drugs. I know that if Clarence has any questions or suggestions he'll pipe up.

Which is good because at the moment, I'm feeling quite useless.

A knock on the door has me glancing toward it. Clarence doesn't even stop typing, doesn't even look up when Tatum walks in.

Good man.

Tatum opens his mouth to say something, but bites it off when he hears Senator Ruiz on the phone. His eyes flash to mine, and I narrow my gaze. My hand slips to the belt on my pants, and I undo it. I watch as Tatum swallows, a blush moving up his neck and cheeks.

I unzip my pants, and he wets his lips, glancing over at Clarence, who isn't paying any attention to this.

I could bend Tatum over the desk and he wouldn't even peer up.

That's why I trust him. He's always so discreet.

My hand reaches between my legs, and I pull my half-hard dick out. It settles on my thigh, and I watch him. He knows what I want and yet, he's hesitating.

He flipped the switch on me. He better take what I'm offering.

He eyes Clarence once more and then his gaze lands on the phone, Senator Ruiz still talking.

"Yes, I agree," I respond and then spread my legs a little wider.

He wets his lips once more and then moves, settling on the floor between my legs and running his hands up my thighs.

I let out a puff of air at the sensation, my hands fisted on the arms of my chair.

Tatum glances up at me, wordless, his pupils blown out. His tongue snakes from his mouth, and he laps at the tip of my cock. I watch him as he sucks on it, my length growing harder from the sensation of his wet mouth around it.

My fingers are digging into the leather of my chair as Tatum starts to suck me in earnest, pulling my cock into his mouth slowly, feeling it harden on his tongue.

"What do you think of that?" Senator Ruiz asks, and I glance over at Clarence.

He pauses what he's doing and then responds for me.

"I think that sounds good. I'll put it in the schedule. Now about the..."

He continues to prattle on, taking notes as he goes.

He knows what's happening behind my desk and carries on like he has no idea. He will send me the bullet points of what I'm about to miss.

Because right now, I'm not paying any attention.

Tatum is once again derailing my carefully laid plans.

My eyes never leave his and he keeps his open, watching me as he takes me all the way into the back of his throat.

Fuck, that feels really good.

I run my tongue across the front of my teeth as I sit here, listening to the conversation Clarence and Senator Ruiz are having while Tatum sucks me off. It's wet and sloppy and yet, in his own way, it's controlled.

He moves at a steady pace, not too fast, almost as if he's savoring it.

His cheeks hollow, and I let out a soft grunt at the sensation pulsing up my legs and spine. Fuck.

"What do you think, Anthony?" Clarence asks, and I turn my gaze away from Tatum to meet his stare.

"I'll defer to you on this one," I say, and Clarence fights back a smile.

"Alright," he says and then continues talking while I turn my gaze back to Tatum, who is continuing to suck, his head bobbing, his eyes still on mine. I can see the flush in his cheeks, the spit spilling from the sides of his mouth. It's stretched wide, his hands still on my thighs. He's not even using his fingers to help in getting me off.

He's showing off.

How did he learn to do this?

For some reason, the idea of him with someone else makes my eye twitch.

My fingers reach out and thread through his silver hair, tugging roughly.

He lets out a low moan as I push him down onto my cock and hold him there, his nose pressed up against my pubic hair.

He shifts between my legs, his fingers flexing against my thighs, and then I feel him relax, almost as if he's in some kind of trance. His eyelids flutter closed and he just swallows around me.

I watch him, feel the way that he savors it.

I drag him up my length and then spear him on it again. And again. I'm fucking his face hard now, all while the phone call continues.

My legs start to shake and I'm thrusting up slightly, the leather squeaking under me as I feel myself start to come.

My fingers tighten my hold on him as my cock starts to pulse in his mouth, emptying myself into his throat. I feel him swallow and sigh as I come down from the high of it, my body sagging slightly in the chair. My fingers loosen their hold on him and my cock falls from his mouth. His cheek is resting on my thigh, and I stare down at him, flushed and panting.

I watch as he reaches his hand down and undoes his pants, pulling himself out and stroking his cock in quick, sharp movements. A few seconds later, he's biting his bottom lip and shuddering against me.

I shouldn't enjoy the fact that he got off to pleasuring me, but I am.

Can't quite seem to help it.

My hand grabs on to his face gently and lifts his head from my lap. Cum sits on his lips, and I smear it off, sliding my thumb into his mouth and letting him suck it.

He sighs once more, and then I hear Clarence clear his throat.

“The call ended,” he says before moving his eyes back to his computer. I reach forward and grab a box of tissues and hand it to Tatum. He cleans himself and the mess on the floor while I tuck myself away.

“I believe you have a call to Dean next, about the custom car build...”

“Right, get him on the line,” I say as Tatum stands on shaky legs. He turns to leave, a smug grin on his face.

“Well, that was fun. See you later,” he says with a wink, and suddenly, I’m left feeling a little like a king and much more like a small, weak man.

Clarence eyes me and arches an eyebrow.

If he keeps that up, I may have to cut those off. I turn my gaze back to the computer.

May have to do a good many things now that Tatum is in my life. Although, despite it all, I still have shit to do. More meetings to discuss. I glance at my calendar.

“Clarence,” I say and watch as he lifts his eyes to meet mine. “After Dean, call Sabrina. Have her stop by later.”

“Will do, Boss.”

I lean back in my chair, my legs spread slightly.

Yes, Tatum may be a distraction, but I still have a business to run. And now I need to focus on removing the threat of the Fallen Aces before shit really gets out of hand.

# 10

TATUM

I walk around the garden with Angel, Teddy, and Casey, feeling slightly smug. I mean, why wouldn't I? Anthony let me suck his dick. In his office.

With some old dude sitting on the couch, pretending not to notice, but still.

He wanted me enough to call for me.

I hold my head high as I strut through the flowers, watching as Angel picks a bushel, sniffing each one like a bumblebee.

“Look at this one. It’s gorgeous,” he says as he lifts it up to Teddy’s face.

Pollen gets stuck to the tip of his nose, but Teddy doesn’t rub it away, just lets it sit there while he continues to watch over us. He looks ridiculous, and I can’t help but reach up and smear it around a little, just to irritate him.

Not that he gives me the satisfaction of showing his annoyance. He just stands there, gloomy and serious behind his sunglasses.

“Teddy, does Anthony usually have people come into his meetings and you know...?”

I eye Teddy, who is scanning the horizon. Not that anything is there. Just trees and electric fencing.

“I mean, you know, like—” I lean forward, “—does he have someone come in and suck his dick during meetings?”

Teddy's gaze moves toward me and his lips twitch.

"I mean, he doesn't, right? So that's like a big thing?" I ask, bouncing on my toes.

He doesn't tell me one way or the other, but I know it, deep down. I know that he did this with me and only me.

I grin and sock him in the arm, only hurting myself in the process.

I shake my hand out and sigh. "You have huge arms. You really need to cut back on the exercising."

He doesn't respond, not that I expect him to, but my attention is drawn to the house.

Anthony comes into view, walking toward us, a beautiful woman on his arm.

My jovial spirits plummet, and I find myself scowling. Well, who the fuck is that?

"Who is that?" I ask Teddy, not that I expect an answer. He never talks. I have no idea what his voice sounds like. Oh my god, what if he sounds like Kermit the Frog? I will die if that's the case.

"Honestly, why is she so pretty?" I grumble and then smooth my hand through my hair. It's not nearly as nice as model lady, who is walking arm in arm with Anthony. Maybe he likes how full hers is, how long.

*I could grow my hair out*, I think as they start to approach.

I shift on my feet and fold my arms across my chest, glowering at them, shooting signals toward Anthony. The *I don't share* ones that hopefully he understands. Or at least acknowledges. Not that he's even looking my way.

No, he's looking intently at that woman. Like she hangs the sun and moon. Not that either of those things are hung.

Anthony is though. He's hung real nice.

Like a porn star.

I wonder if sexy lady knows this or not.

Fuck. He told me he wasn't gay and yet there I went, sucking his dick like an eager puppy.

I narrow my eyes as they make their way toward me, so much so that they're almost closed when they come to a stop before us.

Anthony's lips twitch, and I pop my eyes open to make sure he sees how unhappy I am with this little turn of events.

"You out enjoying the sun?" he asks, and I roll my eyes dramatically.

“It’s always sunny here, Anthony. It’s Southern California.” I turn my gaze to the beauty next to him and force a wide smile onto my face.

“Hello there. I’m Tatum Barlowe, and you are?”

She peers over at Anthony, a knowing look in her eyes before extending her perfectly smooth hand toward mine. She even has her nails done and they look expensive.

“Sabrina Nightingale. Nice to meet you, Tatum.”

Nightingale. Are you fucking kidding me? Even her last name towers over mine. And she has nice boobs, which I sadly lack.

“Nice to meet you as well.”

I’m lying and they can tell.

“Are you a friend of Angelo’s?” she asks, and I peer over my shoulder at my friend, who is bending over and inspecting some kind of pink flower.

“Yes. And a friend of Anthony’s as well.”

“Ah, I see.”

Anthony shifts next to her and runs a hand across his jaw. I glower at him, and I swear his eyes twinkle.

Asshole.

“So you’re the reason we’re in all this trouble?” Sabrina asks, and I huff in annoyance.

“Yes, I’m the reason. Although, I don’t think that I asked for it, do you?”

“No, of course not,” she says with a wave of her hand. “Just that I can see why Anthony helped.” She turns toward him and grins. “He’s adorable.”

I roll my eyes, even though I preen inside. I am quite adorable.

Just as I think that, Angel calls his dad over to look at something germinating. Anthony stalks over, and Sabrina and I both watch him go. As soon as he’s out of earshot, she leans toward me, smelling strongly of perfume.

And it’s a nice scent too, expensive.

She’s everything I’m not.

“We’re business partners, Anthony and I.”

I side-eye her. “What kind of business?”

“I run a few brothels, discreet gentlemen’s clubs, that kind of thing.”

“Sounds fun.”

“It is. It really is,” she says with a knowing smile. “But you know, despite investing in my clubs, Anthony’s never been a customer.”

I step closer, not wanting to miss a word.

“He’ll stop by occasionally, check to see how things are going, but never indulges. He never lets himself go, you see.”

I don’t see. He let himself go earlier, my face between his shaking thighs.

Anthony glances over at us and frowns when he sees how close we are standing, how Sabrina is leaning toward me and telling me shit. But he can’t leave his son’s side, not yet. Angel’s still telling him about the plant he found.

“A couple months ago, when I overheard him telling his bodyguards to keep tabs on you, I couldn’t believe it, you know? Anthony Costello, mob boss, having a little boy trailed.”

I turn my gaze toward her fully now, my mouth agape.

“Tabs on me? Trailed? What the hell?”

She blinks in surprise and then lets out a tinkling little laugh. “Yes, didn’t you know?”

“Of course I didn’t know,” I hiss and then feel my dick twitch between my legs. Good fuck, why does that turn me on so much? He was following me? Watching me? Oh my god. Is he just as obsessed as I am?

*Do not get your hopes up.*

They’re already up. Big time.

“Well, that makes sense. Anthony always keeps things close to the vest. But how do you think he made it to you so quickly that night?”

“What?”

I hadn’t thought of that. I called him, and he didn’t even ask where I was, he just knew. Oh my god. He was having me followed.

“I never thought Anthony would be interested in another man, but then again, I hadn’t met you, now had I? I can see the appeal.”

I shake my head just as a loud explosion rocks the ground we’re standing on.

Sabrina shoves me to the ground and whips around.

“Get down!”

I cover my head, my heartbeat ringing in my ears. Oh my god! Oh my fucking god! What was that?

“Fuckers,” Sabrina says as she hikes up her dress and pulls a gun from her thigh.

Oh shit, she’s not only beautiful, but a badass too.

“Stay on the ground, Tatum!” Anthony commands, his voice clipped and strained. “Teddy, Casey, take Angelo to the basement.”

“What about me?” I scream as they start to move, their bodies crouched around Angelo.

“You’re not going anywhere near Bane,” Anthony scowls.

“So you’d rather I get blown up?” I shout as Sabrina moves away from me, far too nimble in her high heels.

Bitch.

“Behind the fountain. Now! Now!” Anthony says, pulling a gun from the back of his pants and firing off shots in rapid succession.

I do as he says, jumping into a crouch and scrambling behind the large stone structure, cowering behind it.

I peer up at him, and fuck, he looks sexy in this moment. Smoke billowing around him, his arms tight as the gun pumps in his hand, his gaze laser-focused. When his clip is gone, he crouches down and reloads with a flick of his wrist.

“Do you just carry ammo around with you?” I ask, and his eye twitches.

“Yes. Stay there,” he tells me and when it’s quiet for a second, he ducks down and moves toward me. His body settles next to mine, and I feel reassured that he’s right next to me.

“I’m not going to move unless you tell me to. Because apparently you’d rather I die than hang out with Bane again.”

He scowls at me and then falls atop of my body when another gunshot rings out. I’m on my back, his body fully against mine now, and I swear to god, I’m hard as a rock. That twitch earlier turned into a full-blown boner.

He glances down at me, arching an eyebrow in question as I purse my lips. “It’s the adrenaline. I can’t help it.”

He huffs a small laugh and then grinds his hips against mine, making me gasp.

“Now is not the time,” I hiss and then curl my legs around the back of his thighs, keeping him in place.

“Now is *not* the time,” he agrees and yet makes no effort to move off me.

Five more gunshots ring out, men shouting, and another explosion goes off. It’s like a war zone. I’m not liking this at all. I scrunch my eyes closed, pulling Anthony closer to me, feeling the warm puffs of his breath against

my skin. He doesn't seem at all anxious in this situation. I can feel the steady beat of his heart against my own.

"Are we gonna die?" I ask, and Anthony huffs a laugh.

"No, but those fuckers will, I guarantee you. This will be over in a minute. And anyone left alive, I'll hand over to Bane."

"You've forgiven him?" I ask, and Anthony grumbles under his breath.

"That's a strong word. I've allowed him to continue on in my employ."

"How benevolent."

He lets out a low chuckle, the sound reverberating through me. I bite back a groan at the sensation, wanting more but realizing that this really isn't ideal. My back is digging into the gravel and there are still shouts and gunshots all around us.

Although we could die, so I should make the most of my last minutes.

But before I can convince myself to lean up and kiss him, everything goes silent.

"We good?" he asks loudly, and I hear a shout that it's all clear.

Anthony lifts off me, brushing his pants off before offering me a hand. His eyes slide down my body, landing on the bulge in my jeans.

"Shut up," I murmur as he pulls me up on my shaking legs. "We almost died. My body malfunctioned."

His eyes twinkle. "We were fine. My men were on it."

But they dim as he takes in the destruction in the distance.

"Fuck," he says and runs a hand through his hair. I feel my knees start to buckle and he reaches out and pulls me into him.

I lean into his strength, inhaling the scent of him.

"You'll be okay. It's just the adrenaline."

I nod and swallow roughly as I curl my fingers into his shirt.

Sabrina makes her way toward us, her hair slightly mussed. Even still, she looks amazing.

"Seems your security is as good as ever," she says with a grin. "Never doubted you."

"Always," Anthony replies, his hand snaking around my hip. I nuzzle my face into his chest and let him hold me tighter.

"We should get into the house," Anthony says, and we make our way toward the back porch. As we move, Viktor comes jogging up, a frown on his face, dirt on his cheeks.

“Shit, you’re okay. Goddamn,” he says and then runs a hand through his tangled hair.

“What happened?” Anthony asks, all business, his steps sure and steady.

“Four men tried to get in with grenades and semi-auto rifles. Mike’s injured, leg wound, but we got them subdued pretty quick. Fuck, we may need to hire more guards. How the hell did this happen? Wait, what about Teddy and Bane? Oh my god, Casey.”

Anthony’s jaw ticks. “They’re fine. They’re with Angelo.”

I stare at Viktor, who looks more upset right now than Anthony. The other guards are probably his friends.

Luca makes his way down the steps of the house, and Viktor stiffens.

“Everyone okay? Where’s Angel?” Luca asks.

“In the basement with Teddy and Casey. They should be inside by now.”

“Where were you?” Viktor asks Luca accusingly.

Luca’s jaw tightens, and he throws a thumb over his shoulder. “I was taking care of business inside.”

Viktor scoffs, but Anthony cuts off any bickering.

“I want you all in my office to discuss this. I want to know everything.”

He lets me go, and I slouch against the porch railing, rubbing at my chest. I suddenly feel lightheaded, and now that Anthony is moving away from me, I feel like crying. The full impact of what just happened is hitting me. My eyes sting, and I sniffle.

Anthony hesitates a moment, his gaze landing on mine.

“Come here,” he says, and I shuffle toward him, my knees weak. He pulls me into him and leads me inside and into his office. Viktor, Sabrina, and Luca follow behind us, the door clicking shut and locking.

“Pour us a glass,” Anthony says as he settles on the couch and pulls me onto his lap. “And once we’re ready, you tell me everything.”

I tuck myself into him and let his silent strength ground me. Suddenly, I don’t feel so alone. I feel like everything’s going to be okay. And as they talk, discussing the events from earlier, I just let my eyelids close, listening to the steady beat of his heart.

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“How many are still alive?” Anthony asks, his thighs spread slightly beneath me as I curl into him.

“Two. Bane has them now.”

“Good, have him keep them alive until we can get more information out of them. Keep their tongues too. I want them to be able to talk. Do we know who they’re with? Aces?”

“Not sure yet, but Bane will get it out of them,” Luca says.

“It has to be them. If not them, then a gang affiliated with them. Someone stupid enough to come after us here,” Luca says.

“Do you think this will affect me and my girls?” Sabrina asks, sounding slightly worried. A stark contrast to the badass she was earlier.

“Yes, there’s a possibility. They hit Raphael.”

“Why is this the first I’m hearing about it?” Sabrina replies angrily. “You should put out a notification to all your subsidiaries to be on the lookout. This is dangerous.”

“I will,” Anthony bites out. “We’ve caught and killed everyone they’ve sent out. I didn’t realize they’d be this stupid.”

“Seems they are. But it’ll be their downfall. I guarantee that,” Viktor says.

“It will.”

They continue discussing semantics, but my mind filters in and out of the conversation, only hearing bits and pieces of it. At one point, they get a senator on the phone. Something about sending some agents down to the Fallen Aces to put heat on them. I try like hell to pay attention, but I honestly don’t care what they’re discussing. I just want Anthony to continue holding me like he is.

Eventually the conversation ends and everyone finishes their drinks and stands.

“Send me updates on Mike’s condition,” Anthony adds before Luca and Viktor leave.

“Will do, Boss,” Viktor replies.

Sabrina leans down and presses a kiss to my cheek before the sound of her heels clack out of the room. The door shuts with a click, and I sigh in the silence, snuggling deeper into him.

Anthony doesn’t move, just holds me to him tightly.

“How are you feeling?” he asks me softly.

“Still terrible. May need you to hold me like this forever.”

He lets out a small chuckle and finishes off his drink. It settles onto the end table with a clink and he leans back with a sigh, his shoulders loosening.

“Fuck, I’m sorry you had to experience that. They should know better than to mess with my family.”

I peer up at him and his gaze meets mine. Something flashes in his eyes, and he wets his lips.

“This is all my fault.”

“No. You did nothing wrong.”

“I did,” I say, my nose stinging and my eyes welling with unshed tears. “I shouldn’t have gone to that bar. Now everyone knows I’m a friend of the family. And that I’m worth the risk. And now everyone’s trying to hurt you.”

“People are always trying to hurt me. This isn’t the first time and it won’t be the last.”

I sigh, my hand unbuttoning his shirt, just one button before slipping my hand through it, letting my palm settle against his warm skin.

“Usually my enemies are more strategic. Those idiots didn’t have a chance coming here with so few men. Like I said, whoever did this was sloppy. Which is why I’m betting it’s attached to the Aces.”

“Yeah,” I murmur as I run my thumb over his nipple. It puckers under my touch, and I tug at it.

Anthony doesn’t move away from me, just continues to hold me close. My hand travels across his chest, feeling his chest hair beneath my palm as I explore.

“And Sabrina?” I have to ask.

“What about her?”

Our gazes collide and I shrug, feigning disinterest. “You know...have you two been...she’s beautiful.”

“She is.”

His fingers tighten against me, and I roll my eyes. “Come on. Have you two fucked? You two have totally fucked.”

“No. It’s always been business between us.”

I snort and then turn into him further, my free hand snaking around the back of his neck.

“She said you’ve been following me for some time.”

Anthony’s gaze darkens.

“Did she?”

“Yeah. Is it true?”

He doesn’t answer, but the tick of his jaw tells me he was.

“I didn’t realize you were doing that? Is it weird that I like it?”

Anthony doesn’t answer, just continues to hold me while I explore his chest with my hand. I want him naked. I want to drag my fingers across every inch of his bare skin. Why is everything about him so hot to me? I can’t quite get him out of my system.

A knock on the door has my exploration coming to a halt as Angel walks in. He jogs toward me and pulls me into a tight hug. My hand slips from Anthony’s shirt as Angel cradles me against him and runs his hand through my hair.

“Oh god, I was so worried. Why didn’t you come with us?”

I shake my head and swallow, feeling Anthony stiffen behind me.

“He was with me,” he finally says.

Angel glances at his dad and frowns. “He would have been safer below.”

I can feel Anthony’s heart speed up, but he doesn’t reply.

“And Bane was asking about you. He said he left something on your bedside table.”

My eyebrows rise, and I feel my cheeks flush. “Really? That’s so sweet.”

“It’s not sweet,” Anthony bites out. “I guarantee you that.”

Angel cocks his head, staring at his dad intently.

“Okay, well, I’m going to take Tatum with me. Agatha said she had some hot chocolate for him and a pastry. That might help you feel better.”

The idea of food makes my stomach rumble, and I realize how hungry I really am.

Anthony’s hand loosens its grip on me, and Angel helps me stand. I glance back at that powerful mafia boss, who is watching us carefully. His legs spread, his hands fisted on either side of him. Fuck, he’s a dream.

“Come on, let’s go eat and then let’s see what Bane left you,” Angel says, tugging me toward the door.

“Yeah, okay,” I say as he leads me out of his dad’s office. I don’t look back. Even though I want to. And even though I can feel his gaze piercing my skin.

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# 11

TATUM

Bane left me a kneecap. Tied with a bright red ribbon.

Angel sighs, his hands clenched to his chest. "How romantic. I've never gotten a body part before."

I eye him as I pick the kneecap up with a tissue and stare at it. Wonder whose this is. "This is the first time I've really thought of you as a mob boss's son."

"Really, why?" he asks as he sets a vase of flowers on my desk.

"You'd like being gifted a body part."

"I mean, it's a very nice thought."

I shake my head, laughter bubbling out of me. "God, Angel."

"What?" he giggles as he flops down on the bed and grins at me. "I'd love for some hot guy to give me a body part. Even someone as crazy as Bane."

"He is a little...different."

"And hot."

I roll my eyes and then run a hand through my hair. "Not as hot as your dad."

"Ew, don't tell me anything, Tatum. I really don't want to hear it."

"I promise not to traumatize you."

He nods and then scoots closer to me. "I just want him to be happy. He hasn't been in so long."

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, but I see the way he looks at you. I think...” Angel bites back his words, and I nudge him.

“You can’t lead with that and not finish your thought.”

“I just think you can make him really happy. If you’re up for it. He’s not an easy man.”

I peer up at him, and he nuzzles into my neck.

“And I don’t know how much longer I’ll be here, so I need you to take care of him, okay?”

“What?” I ask, and he sighs.

“After what happened today, I think I’ll be packing up and moving.”

I sit up quickly. “What the fuck, Angel? Why?”

“It’s dangerous now and my dad wants to protect me. He can do that by creating a business alliance with the Russian mob.”

“You’re not a business transaction!”

“I know, but it has to happen.”

My face is red, and I twist on the bed to face my friend.

“It really doesn’t.”

He clasps my cheeks in his hands and rubs his nose against mine.

“I’ll be fine. I promise.”

I don’t like this. Not at all.

---

I wait until the evening when Angel is asleep and roll out of bed, moving toward Anthony’s room on my tiptoes.

I should burst in there, guns blazing, but I don’t know if he’d take that well.

I think perhaps something else is in the cards for him tonight.

Without knocking, I enter the room, surprised it’s unlocked. I see Anthony in bed, his back propped up against the headboard, shirt off, reading glasses on.

Oh my god, he wears reading glasses.

Why is he so ungodly hot all the fucking time?

I stare at him before focusing my mind. Yes, I remember why I’m here, and I’m very angry.

Very, very angry.

He's going to sell his son off. Angel. My sweet, beautiful friend.

"Can I help you?" he asks, arching an eyebrow at me behind those hot as fuck glasses. He looks less mafia boss and more stern professor, and it's doing things to my dick.

I swallow and nod. "Yes, yes you can."

I turn my gaze and stare intently at the window. I will not glance at him, bare-chested and looking like a hot teacher while he's in bed. If I do, then I won't be able to get angry enough.

And I want to get angry. Very, very irate.

"Well then, what is it?"

"What is it? It's...you're going to marry Angel off to some Russian dude on the East Coast. I thought we'd been over this."

I huff and fold my arms across my chest. I can see his reflection in the window panes and my dick gets hard. I turn to stare at the ceiling instead.

"Look at me," he says, and I close one eye and peer over at him. Perhaps half my vision will help curb how insanely hot he is.

It does not.

I'm just as affected.

"Come here," he says and then folds the sheets back and points to his lap.

I stare at him and shake my head. "I'm mad at you, Anthony."

"Come here," he says again, this time a little softer.

That gentle tone makes my feet move forward, and I come to a stop at the side of his bed.

His arm reaches out and he pulls me onto him, my legs straddling his bare thighs. He's only wearing boxer briefs, and he looks absolutely delicious.

I'm at full-mast now, ready to set sail right into the palm of his hand.

His fingers slide to my bare hips and slip down below the waistband of my pajama bottoms. With a tug, I'm closer, my body almost flush with his.

"Now, tell me again why you're so mad?" he asks, and I shift on his lap, my hands moving up to his shoulders. Oh god, I can feel the muscles there. I trace them with my fingers, biting my bottom lip to try and stay in control.

"You're selling your son off for a business deal."

"No, I'm marrying him off for his protection. That family is powerful. Angelo will be safe there."

“But he’ll be married to a stranger. He’s always wanted to marry for love, Anthony. You have to know that.”

My eyes flicker down to meet his, and I see something flash in those dark depths. He feels it. I know he does. He loves his son, despite how hardened he outwardly appears.

“I know, it doesn’t make sense to you. But this is the best chance he has of staying alive. If there was another way...”

“There have to be other ways.”

“Not for someone like Angelo. An ordinary man couldn’t protect him. He needs someone fierce.”

“And someone who can give you plenty of shady business deals,” I chime in.

Anthony’s fingers dip a little lower, cradling the curve of my bare ass.

“That is a perk, but my business is nothing to me without my sons.”

“And yet Diablo married for love.”

“Diablo can take care of himself and Skylar would die for him. That’s the kind of man Angelo needs.”

“And a Russian mobster is the one to give it to him?”

I feel the tips of his fingers flex against the globes of my ass, and I bite back a moan. Oh god, I’m not angry anymore. I’m just horny. Damn him.

“Yes, and if he’s truly unhappy, I’ll find a way to bring him home. But, Tatum, I really think he’ll find a home there.”

I stare at him, trying like hell to keep my hormones at bay, but my god, the way he’s touching my ass is making me all sorts of crazy.

“I don’t believe you.”

“We can go visit once he’s married, so you can see.”

I eye him and then let my hands trail into his hair, mussing it slightly.

“You look so hot in those glasses,” I groan as my hips cant against his.

He lets out a small huff of amusement and then his hands tug my pajama bottoms down, right past my hard cock. It strains out toward him, and I let out a low moan.

His fist wraps around it, and he pumps me lazily.

“I’m still very mad at you,” I rasp, my hips jutting up into his hand.

“I know. I can tell. So very mad.”

I manage a small eye roll, but they end up in the back of my head as I give myself over to the sensation of him touching me.

His other hand snakes down my ass and he slides a finger through my crack. It stops right at my hole, pressing against it gently.

“Oh my god,” I breathe, my eyelids fluttering open.

I see Anthony watching me intently through those glasses. Suddenly, I want to kiss him, want to spear my tongue into his mouth and taste him. But I don’t lean forward and do it.

I’m too afraid.

I really don’t think that Anthony is into men. I honestly don’t know what this is between us, and I’m too afraid to do anything that might make him take a step back and stop. I want to ride this out as long as he’ll have me.

My hands fall to his cheeks, and I brush my thumbs across his lips. His pupils dilate as I slip a finger into his mouth. His tongue snakes around it, warm and wet, and I feel my hole clench around the finger still pressed against me, not entering me, just tracing the rim over and over. Taunting me.

I pull my finger through his lips, looking at the spit-covered skin before pressing two inside, letting him suck on me, pretending it’s my dick in that warm mouth. I can’t believe he’s letting me do this.

I can’t fucking believe it.

And then suddenly his teeth snap down on my knuckles, holding me inside of him, nearly in the back of his throat.

I gasp, my cock jerking in his hand as he continues to work me over with every part of him. His tongue slides against my fingers, almost like he’s tracing the vein under my dick, and my mind conjures up all sorts of filthy thoughts.

“Anthony,” I breathe, and I watch as he hollows his cheeks out, creating a suction on my fingers that goes straight to my dick.

I hear a creak, a door opening, but I don’t even turn to look. I’m too enamored with Anthony sucking my digits. Fuck, he’s so hot. If he ever sucked my actual dick, I’d probably die. My soul would just leave my body entirely.

“Oh, goodie. A show I didn’t know I needed,” a familiar voice says, and I turn my head to see Bane standing in the shadows, his hand on his dick over his pants, a goofy smile on his face.

My fingers slide from Anthony’s mouth, leaving his lips wet, and I watch as he eyes his employee.

“You’re early, Bane.”

“Wanted to make a good impression, Boss. Don’t want you to cut my fingers off.”

Anthony huffs, but doesn’t stop touching me, just keeps shuttling his fist up and down my cock. I don’t even care that Bane sees this. I apparently have no qualms about doing this with Anthony in front of others. He could take me anywhere, bend me over, and I’d be a willing participant.

“Well, you can wait until we’re done,” Anthony says as he turns his attention back to me, shifting me even closer. I can feel his hard cock through his boxer briefs.

I groan and then hear fabric rustling behind us, but I don’t even care to look. I’m riveted.

With Anthony.

His finger pulses against my ass, and I shiver as his fist moves faster, bringing me close to the edge. My head falls back slightly, my eyes shutting as I just let myself experience it. The feeling of him. I feel lips brush across my Adam’s apple, sucking on my skin lightly, and I let out a shaky breath.

“Who do you belong to?” he asks, his words hitting my throat.

“You. You,” I whisper, and he hums his satisfaction, his finger pressing into me gently. Not too far, but just enough to have me crying out softly, my fingers digging into his shoulders as I feel myself start to crest that highest peak. My body starts to tense and shake and then I’m bursting, my cum hitting his hand and abdomen as he continues to mouth at my skin and fist my throbbing cock.

And then his fingers loosen against me and his lips leave my neck.

Slowly, I blink my eyes open and meet his gaze.

“Anthony,” I breathe, and his lips twitch.

“Feel better?”

I nod and swallow roughly.

“I have business to discuss with Bane,” he tells me, and I nod again, starting to move off him, but he stops me, his hands clasping onto my ass.

“Did I say I was done with you?”

My eyes widen, and I wet my lips as he pulls his cock from his boxers. It’s hard and wet at the tip, and I groan at the sight.

His fingers thread through my hair and he guides my lips to his hard length.

I know Bane is watching, can feel his eyes on us, but I don't fucking care. I just lick up Anthony's cock as he spreads his legs a little wider, giving me better access. I suck on his balls, rolling them on my tongue before dragging my mouth up to the tip of him, swirling my tongue through his slit.

I can hear Bane panting on the other side of the room, but he doesn't speak up. Just continues to be a major pervert. Not that I expected anything else.

"What do you need to tell me that couldn't wait?" Anthony says lowly as I start to work his enormous cock into my mouth. Drool spills down the sides as I wet him for better access. My jaw aches as I slide my hand up his thigh, holding on tight as I nearly unhinge my jaw to fit him inside.

"Uh, Boss-man. I can't fucking think right now. Can I finish this first?" Bane grunts, and Anthony's fingers tighten in my hair.

"No. Focus. I don't have all night, as you can see."

"It's hard. I'm hard," Bane says with a small giggle as I pull Anthony right into the back of my throat.

I open my eyes and meet his stare. His pupils are blown out, his lips parted slightly as he watches me. Then his gaze moves to the other side of the room.

"What do you have to tell me?" he asks, and Bane sighs.

"Can't think when my dick is this hard, Boss. Won't make much sense. Something about your boy gets my gears going."

Anthony tugs on my hair, pulling me off his cock. My lips are swollen, my eyes watering. It's only now that I realize my pajama pants are still down, my ass exposed. But I make no move to pull them up. Bane can look if he wants.

And really, Anthony makes these choices for me. And I love it when he commands me like this.

"Who do you belong to?" he asks me again, and I lick my lips.

"You," I whisper and he nods, pushing me back onto his cock, nearly choking me with it this time. His pace is brutal and the noises I'm making, the gurgling gags as he punches the back of my throat with his cock have Bane moaning in the corner. Neither are speaking right now.

Anthony is giving him a show, letting Bane see who owns me.

"Fuck, you two are so hot," Bane moans. "All you need is a little blood...some knife play..."

“Shut up, Bane, before I cut your tongue out,” Anthony clips out, his legs starting to tremble. “Tatum, don’t swallow. You keep me inside that hot little mouth,” he commands, and I groan at the thought. I have no idea what he wants me to do with his cum, but I’m here for it apparently.

His fingers tighten on me and then with a low moan his cock twitches in my mouth.

“Don’t you fucking swallow,” he bites out as he shakes beneath me. His orgasm is endless, my cheeks almost bulging from the amount of cum he’s spilling into me.

“Shit, Boss. That’s, oh fuck, that’s impressive,” Bane murmurs and then lets out a manic little laugh.

“You hear that, Tatum,” Anthony says, his voice low and dangerous. “He’s impressed.”

As soon as his cock slips from my mouth, he tugs my hair, forcing my gaze to his once more. My vision swims, and I feel some cum dribble from the corner of my mouth.

“Empty this on his cock. Show him what a good boy you are for me. Then come back here.”

I nod, pushing myself up on wobbly arms and stumbling toward Bane, who is watching us with a shimmering stare, spread out on a chair. I notice that he has blood on his neck and part of his shirt, but I ignore it. I just grab on to the arms of the chair and lean over, letting Anthony’s cum spill from my mouth onto his uncut dick.

Bane groans and then continues to work himself into a frenzy. I watch the slick of it slide down his length for a second before tripping my way back to Anthony. Before I get into bed, I kick off my pajama bottoms and crawl between his legs, my back against his chest.

“I’m a lucky fucking duck. Have the best boss,” Bane moans and then I hear his hand speed up, the squelch of Anthony’s release sliding across Bane’s cock.

“Fuck yes!” he shouts and then I hear him grunt.

But I’m not paying much attention to him. My eyes are closed and I’m just relishing the fact that Anthony is holding me, his hands sliding languidly up and down my chest, stopping occasionally to pluck at my nipples.

“Oh fuck, that was real nice. I feel better,” Bane says with a laugh. I listen as he zips his pants up and hops to his feet. One of my eyes pops

open, and I peer at him before shutting it again.

“Now. Tell me. What did they say?” Anthony asks, his voice gruff, his hands gently stroking across my skin.

“Oh, fuck a duck. Right. That’s why I’m here. Those fuckers were hired out by Douglas Kennedy.”

“Thought so.”

“Didn’t take much to get them talking. They have no stamina. None. Saved their tongues for you too.”

“Hm. Good.”

“Can I keep playing with them?” Bane asks, and Anthony nods.

“I’ll be down tomorrow morning.”

“Perfect,” he says and then moves toward the bed, stopping near us.

“Thanks for that. You two are cute together,” he says as he ruffles my hair. “My little snack.”

Anthony huffs, and I grin.

“Thanks, Bane,” I say and then turn into Anthony slightly, feeling my entire body relax. I just want to sleep against him and wake to him holding me.

A door opens somewhere near the bathroom and then Bane is gone, leaving Anthony and me alone. I sigh as he continues to run his hands up and down my chest.

“Do you normally let Bane jack off in your room?”

“No. But he does what he wants.”

I hum in agreement. I barely know Bane and I know this about him. He’s a wild card, and yet really endearing.

“Are you really going to cut their tongues out?”

“Yes.”

“Do you enjoy it?”

“I do.”

I sigh and then nestle into him. “Is it weird that I find that incredibly hot?”

He huffs out a small laugh and then shifts us further down the bed.

“No.”

“Can I stay here tonight?” I ask as he pulls the covers up over us.

“Yes.”

I turn into him more and let my hands slide up his strong chest, settling on the base of his neck, right where his pulse point is. I feel it thrumming

under my fingers and let myself drift off, feeling safe and satiated.

---

I get another call from Brayden the next day, and I hit ignore. I honestly couldn't care less to talk to him. I have Anthony now.

Not that I wanted Brayden after the way he treated me, how small he made me feel.

I don't feel small with Anthony, that's for sure. The way he claims me...

I shiver and feel my dick start to grow hard in my pants. Of course it does. It doesn't stop. Just the thought of Anthony has me panting.

"Who was that?" the man of my obsession asks, peering over my shoulder as he stops behind me on the porch.

I shove my phone into my pocket and shrug.

"Just an annoying ex."

Anthony's eye twitches and his jaw tightens. "Brayden?"

I roll my lips between my teeth. "Perhaps."

"Do I need to speak with him?"

"Oh my god, please don't. Honestly, I don't want him dead, Anthony," I say with a laugh.

"No one said anything about dead," he says lowly, his hand skirting around my waist. "But perhaps a trip is in order, with Bane. Just a friendly visit."

"Oh my hell," I say with a nervous laugh. "I swear. Do not."

He doesn't respond, but before I can tell him that he will absolutely not do anything of the sort, my phone rings loudly.

I hesitate to pull it out, but then when I peer at the screen, I see it's my mom. I grin and answer it immediately. It's been over a week since I've spoken with her, and I miss her.

"Hey, Mom!"

"Tatum-poo. My little Tater-Tot!"

"Please don't call me that," I say when I see Anthony's lips twitch. My cheeks flush and I take a step away from him. Good fuck. He doesn't need to be hearing any of that. How reprehensible. But I can't really get mad at her. As embarrassing as they are, my mom and dad have been the best adoptive parents a kid could ask for.

“How are you, love? I haven’t heard from you in forever. I thought you were dead.”

“Jesus, I’m not dead. Just busy...with school.”

“Oh, of course you are, I was only joking. Paul! Paul! Come talk to Tatum-poo!” I can hear her yelling for my dad and I sigh, peering over at Anthony, who is watching me intently.

“Not a word,” I mouth and then remove my gaze from him when I see his lips start to twitch. Infernal man.

“Son? Tater? Poo bear?” my dad asks with a snort, and I roll my eyes, chuckling softly under my breath.

“Shut up, Dad. Don’t encourage her.”

“Ah, but you know how I like to rile her up. Gets her all huffy.”

“Paul!” I hear her screech, and I take a few steps away from Anthony, to the far side of the porch.

“How are you though? How’s school? Almost done? Have you sent us the graduation information?”

I peer over at Anthony and wonder if he’ll let me walk for the graduation ceremony. Honestly, I don’t know. We’ll have to discuss it because so far, I haven’t been able to leave the premises. Oh my god. Are my parents safe? I don’t fucking know.

Suddenly, my face feels hot and my heart is thumping too hard in my chest. I lean against the post and breathe deeply through my nose.

“Hey, Dad. I’m gonna go, but I’ll send you the graduation stuff, okay?”

“Yeah, you alright?”

“Mhm, just meeting some friends,” I lie and then tell him I love him before hanging up. As soon as I do, I turn to Anthony and his eyes darken.

“What? What happened?” he asks, stalking toward me.

I let out a shaky breath. “My parents. They’re gonna be safe, right? Like, oh my god. Nothing will happen to them, right?”

I feel his hands settle on my shoulders, and he grips me steadily.

“They’ll be fine. I already have cameras set up at their house and someone watching them.”

My eyes widen and my mouth falls agape. “What the hell?”

His fingers start to slowly massage my tense muscles and despite knowing I need to be appalled by his behavior, I just can’t be mad about it. He is Anthony Costello, mob boss. I shouldn’t have expected anything less.

“They’re safe. Don’t worry. Rafe is there with them.”

I don't know who the fuck that is, but I'm glad someone is looking out for them.

"If my mom has any hint of Rafe lurking, she's going to drag him in and feed him."

"It's already happened. She thought he was homeless."

I snort and see Anthony's eyes twinkle. "To be fair, he was in his car quite often this last week."

My lips are pulled between my teeth, and I nod. "Thank you. Really. Thank you, Anthony."

"I won't let anyone or anything hurt you or those you care about. I promise."

My eyes start to sting, my vision slightly wavy.

"Thank you."

He nods and his hands leave my shoulders, falling to his sides. I see his fists clench and I fight the urge to push myself into him, right into that strong chest. This infatuation is getting out of hand.

Maybe I'll give Teddy a hug when I see him. He seems like he could use one.

Yeah, that's what I'll do.

"Why don't we invite them over?"

My eyes widen, and I shake my head. "That would be a terrible idea. My mother is a meddler."

Anthony's eyes sparkle. "Is that so?"

"Yes, you don't want her here. I promise."

He runs a hand across his face. "I think we should extend the invite, especially because you won't be attending your graduation."

"Is that so?" I'm not even mad about it. I don't want to put anyone at risk because I'm being stubborn about attending a graduation ceremony.

His lips twitch at the bite in my voice. "I'll contact them and let them know, and I'll have Connie make up a room for them for a few weeks from now."

"Anthony Costello, I will murder you."

He moves toward me, his hand cupping the front of my neck gently. "Don't threaten me with a good time."

My pulse kicks up, and I hold in a moan. Suddenly, his hand is gone and his lip curls up at the corner. "I have business to attend to, but I look forward to meeting your parents."

Well, fuck.

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## 12

TATUM

“Oh, your parents are coming to visit?” Angel asks, glancing down at his phone, his cheeks flushed.

“Yes, unfortunately. Your dad wants to meet them.” I take a step closer to my friend, and he hides his phone behind his back.

“Who are you talking to?” I ask, and he shakes his head, his cheeks darkening.

“No one.”

“Angel, seriously. You’re blushing big time. It’s not no one.”

“I am not. I just got some sun.” Even as he says it, his cheeks turn an even darker shade and it bleeds down his neck.

“Sure,” I drawl and then whisper, “I wanna know what you’re hiding.”

“I can’t,” he replies, his eyes pleading. “I can’t. It’s a secret.” He glances around and lowers his voice even more. “I don’t want my dad to know. I promised not to tell...”

“Oh my god. Is this dangerous? Does it have anything to do with Bane?”

His head reels back, and he lets out a startled laugh. “No! It’s not that. I promise. It’s perfectly safe.”

I arch an eyebrow and he shakes his head, biting down on his bottom lip.

“I really can’t say. I promised.”

I sigh and then pull him into my arms. “Just be safe. And I’m here to keep your secrets.”

“I know, and I’d tell you, but I have a feeling my dad could pry it from you with just a well-placed look.”

“He could not.”

He grins at me and presses a sweet kiss to my cheek. “I know you think you’re strong, but he holds power over you. As you do him.”

I scoff at that. There is no way that I hold anything over Anthony. Nothing at all.

“You’re delusional.”

He grins at me sweetly. “I know I’m not. Anyways, I’ve been wanting to show you something. Want to see?”

He loops his arm through mine and leads me toward the conservatory, and I follow along, my excitement getting the better of me as Angel pulls me behind a dwarf palm tree and pushes a latch on the wall.

“I’m serious. Why didn’t you tell me about these secret doors before? They’re amazing.”

It’s Angel’s turn to arch an eyebrow at me this time. “Because I knew you’d be insufferable. If it wasn’t for Bane, you’d still not know about them. But since the cat is out of the bag...”

He pulls me inside and then the door closes behind us. “These don’t just go into the catacombs, but they also go to different places in the house. So we can sneak around.”

His phone light turns on, and I see the eerie pathway ahead of us.

“It’s over here.”

He pulls me forward and then grins back at me.

“My dad would kill me for showing you this, but I think you need some leverage and I don’t know if he’ll ever show you.”

My eyes widen as he pulls me further along.

Finally we come to a stop in front of a door and he pulls a key card from his pocket and unlocks it.

I hold my breath, unsure what I’ll find here, but then the lights flicker on and I take it all in.

Oh my god.

“What is this?” I breathe, and Angel sighs as he spins in a slow circle.

“It’s my dad’s secret hobby.”

I glance at the black and white pictures hanging on strings and lining the walls. The pictures are old, I can tell—they’re curling at the edges, the equipment coated with dust. Leaning forward, I make out the image of a beautiful woman in each one.

“Is this your mom?”

Angel nods and points to a picture of his mom, heavily pregnant.

“He hasn’t been down here for ages, but I found it when Luca told me about it. They shared her, did you know?”

My eyebrows rise at that. “What?”

“Yeah, Luca was in love with her as well.” He sighs and then flops down on a dusty chair, a puff of particles floating in the air around us.

“I had no idea.”

“Yeah, I guess that it was special between them. I’m not supposed to know, but look.”

He points to a picture right above his head, and I take a step closer, peering at a young Luca holding Anthony’s wife in his arms, looking at her adoringly.

“That must have been a shock when you found out.”

“Yeah, it was. I freaked out at first but then I got a paternity test, just to make sure, and I know Anthony’s my dad. Luca was just the third, I guess, and Dad must not have minded.”

His eyes meet mine, and he cocks his head. “I don’t know if he’ll let Luca join with you though.”

I feel my cheeks start to burn. “I don’t think so either.”

“Would you want that? A third?”

“No, I don’t think so. I just want...Anthony.”

Angel nods and leans his head back. “Yeah, I think when you find your person or people, you just know.”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“My dad looks at you like he does my mom in her pictures, maybe even more so.”

I shake my head and then bite my bottom lip, fighting back hope.

“He’s not gay.”

“I know, but he’s obsessed with you. What does preference matter in that case?”

*It’s true*, I think as I wander around the space, taking in all the photos, and then I sigh.

“Why did he stop? Photography, I mean.”

“Heartbreak, I think. Maybe he’ll take it up again soon.”

His eyes twinkle, and I tamp down the hope building inside of me. No, no fucking way. But then again...

I shake my head and fall down next to Angel, resting my head against his shoulder.

“Don’t get your hopes up.”

“Oh, Tatum, all I have is hope.”

---

“Where were you?” Anthony grumbles at me as I stand in his office.

“Oh, just here and there.”

Angel made me promise not to tell anyone where I was or what I saw. Apparently, no one really knows about this little secret hobby of Anthony’s. Although, I would like him to take an interest in photographing me.

But then again, why would he? He barely knows me. He does seem to care about me though. He did rescue me from the bad men and has begun some kind of turf war over it.

I don’t know. I try not to ask too many questions.

“Were you with Bane?” His jaw tightens.

I snort and then murmur, “I wish.”

His fists tighten on his desk and he leans back, the leather creaking under his weight.

“Is that so?”

I peer at him from behind my lashes and grin slightly. “Maybe.”

His eyes narrow, and he lets out a breath. “Tatum.”

“Anthony,” I tease and then lower myself onto the couch. “What did you call me in here for anyways? Aren’t you a busy man?”

“I am, and yet still, I find time for you.”

I turn my head and meet his gaze. “What’s on your agenda for this evening?”

He rubs his lips together and then his hands fall to the arms of his chair.

“I’m sure you’d like to know.”

“I mean, I would. I do love to be nosy.”

“Yes, you do.”

I feel my body heat as he watches me, and then he leans back in his seat a little more.

“I have a meeting with some of my capos. It’s going to be...quite trying. I’d like you to be waiting for me in my room when I’m done.”

My entire body is lit on fire. “That is quite an ask. I may have plans.”

“Be there or else.”

I blink up at him and his breathing grows slightly labored.

“We’ll see,” I say, pushing myself to my feet, my dick hard and straining from my pants. I adjust it just as men start to make their way into the room, Luca being one of them. He greets me with a saucy grin, pulling my hand up to his mouth for a kiss. His warm lips touch the back of my hand and my breath stutters out of me.

“You can go, Tatum,” Anthony says curtly, suddenly beside me.

Luca grins at me and winks, making me blush as Anthony escorts me to the door.

“Do not even think about it,” he murmurs. “And if there are any doubts about what I want, I’ll make sure they’re alleviated tonight.”

I swallow roughly and nod. “We’ll see.”

His hand cups my chin roughly and his dark eyes sparkle.

“Don’t make me hunt you down.”

“Don’t tempt me with a good time.”

His thumb brushes against my bottom lip before it falls from me and he walks away, the door shutting on me.

I turn to Teddy and shake out my arms.

“Good god. Your boss is hot *and* sexy.”

Teddy doesn’t move, and I thread my arm through his. “If you had to hide somewhere, where would it be? Just out of curiosity.”

His sunglasses hide his gaze, but I know he’s looking at me.

“Just lead the way, big man. I won’t blame you for anything that happens after that.”

He huffs and then turns his big body, pulling me outside.

Fuck yes.

Come and get me, Anthony.

# 13

## ANTHONY

I know that Tatum told me not to bother with his ex, but I can't fucking help it. That little shit has been bugging him, calling and texting him at all hours, and I want him to know that I mean business. I don't fucking share. Not him. Not ever.

"Here he is, Boss," Viktor says, pulling a sniveling Brayden in by his arms. He rips the black bag off his head, and I take him in. He's slim with a mop of brown hair on his head and a silly little mustache on his upper lip.

I should cut that right off, would improve his looks for sure.

Everyone in my office turns to stare at the two of them, Luca grinning widely as he fiddles with the cigarette between his fingers.

"Who's this?" he asks, and I stand up and pour myself a drink.

"Just a guest. Someone who's been bothering Tatum."

"I haven't, I swear," Brayden says and just as those words leave his mouth, Bane appears from the hidden door in the wall, covered in blood. It drips from his fingers and face. Shit, well, I wanted theatrics, but fuck, he went all out. Probably rolled around in a bucket of it before coming in here. Connie is going to murder me when she has to clean this up. She hates blood.

"Is this him?" Bane asks as he makes his way up to Brayden, an evil grin on his face. Brayden slithers back against Viktor, but Viktor shoves him

away like the vermin he is, so he's left standing in the middle of the room, visibly shaking. With no one to protect him.

"Yes, this is him."

Bane moves closer and looks him up and down. "Heard you were messing with my little snack."

"I wasn't, I swear," he whispers, his eyes starting to leak. Pathetic.

"You have," I interject, moving up to stand near him, a knife flicking out from the palm of my hand. Luca chuckles lowly, as do the other men in the room. They know what this is. "Do you know what my name is?"

"No. I swear," he says, his voice wobbling.

"I'm Anthony Costello, otherwise known as The Silencer. Do you know why that is?"

"No..."

I push the knife to his chin, and he shirks back.

"He loves cutting tongues out!" Bane interjects, and I turn my gaze to him. "Sorry, got a little excited. He does have nice veins and really nice eyes. I could add them to my collection. Please, Anthony. Pretty please."

Brayden is trembling so hard now that his teeth are clacking.

"Oh, and nice teeth," Bane adds, and I swear this stupid guy is going to faint.

"Bane," I snap, and he closes his mouth, pretending to zip his lips and throw away the key.

"Now, listen to me very carefully," I say, turning my attention back to Brayden, "I'm not going to say this again and if I have to, no one will ever find your body. You stop contacting Tatum. You pretend he doesn't exist. He's mine."

He nods, his eyes wide.

"Every one of these men will come for you if you keep this shit up. Tatum doesn't want you, and to be honest, you come across as very pathetic with the way you're begging."

"So pathetic," Bane says, and Luca laughs lowly behind me.

"So, my man, Viktor, is going to take you back home and you're going to pretend you weren't here, that you never saw any of us, and most importantly, you're going to forget Tatum ever existed."

He nods again and swallows loudly.

"Promise me," I say and he rasps out that he does. *Such an enthusiastic and eager little kid*, I think as Viktor grabs him by his arms, shoves the bag

over his head and escorts him out of the room, the office door shutting with a loud snick. What Tatum saw in him, I have no idea. He's weak and stupid.

"Did I do good, Boss?" Bane asks, and I nod.

"You did."

"I think we really scared him."

"We did."

He bounces on his toes and then sighs. "But I am a little sad I didn't get to keep him."

"Another time," I reply, and he nods.

"Cool. Gonna go see if Agatha has a snack for me," Bane says.

He bounds out of the room with an off-tune whistle as I turn toward the men before me. They're all watching me intently, curiosity in their gazes.

All but Luca, who's running a hand across his jaw and grinning at me.

"Just so you all know, if that wasn't clear, Tatum is Anthony's. He's very...possessive," he says with a smirk.

I nod and pour myself a drink.

"I am, now back to what we were discussing."

"Yeah. Chop, chop. He has someone to get to," Luca interrupts, and I eye him.

"Shut the fuck up."

"It's true," he replies, and I flick my knife out toward him.

"Don't make me use this on you."

Luca grins but snaps his lips shut, his eyes gleaming. I'd never hurt him...well, maybe in the boxing ring, but not with my knife. He's loyal, almost to a fault. But he does like to poke at me, and sometimes it makes me want to stab him.

"Now back to what I called you all here for," I say and then begin to discuss the ways we can infiltrate the Fallen Aces and bring them down, once and for all.

---

That little shit isn't where I told him to be. After everything I do for him, he doesn't even listen.

My heart races in my chest as I stride from my room, my tie loose around my neck.

He disobeyed. Intentionally.

I'm going to make sure he begs for forgiveness when I find him.

I search the house, asking the bodyguards if they've seen him, but all are reluctant to say. He seems to have endeared himself to all of them in such a short amount of time. Seems that they feel a sense of loyalty to him that I'm not quite sure he deserves.

I'm the one who pays them, they should be answering to me.

And yet, part of me loves it. Craves the chase.

"Where are you off to?" Luca asks, suddenly appearing at my side and sliding an arm around my shoulder. He smells like cigarette smoke, having blown through an entire pack after our meeting to discuss how to deal with the current situation involving the Fallen Aces. They've gone after two of my money laundering locations. Luckily, we were able to head them off, but still. It was too close for comfort.

"None of your business."

He scoffs and then our eyes meet. "I see what this is."

"You may see but I still won't share."

"Didn't expect you to. Not that I'm into guys."

I scoff and peer over at Viktor whose cheeks are red.

"I don't need anyone coming with me," I tell Viktor as I head out to the gardens. "Just point me in the right direction."

I turn to a lone soldier standing outside and he nods to the left, toward the edge of my property. At least someone is still loyal to me.

I'm going to make Tatum suffer for this. He knows to stay near the gardens.

If he's with Bane... My strides are long and sure as I walk through my property, not even bothering to look around. Damnable boy.

I should put him over my knee.

In the distance, I see Teddy, a large figure in the shadows, his arms folded, his sunglasses off. They better be, it's night now, only the moon is lighting my path.

My feet crunch over the stones I had placed here years ago to make sure that my kids tracked in as little mud as possible when running to their secret hideout. As I approach him, I see Teddy shift nervously.

"I don't blame you," I say as I approach. "Where is he?"

He tilts his head back, and I glance up at the treehouse that I had built for my sons when they were younger. I spent thousands on it and they spent

so many hours a day here, living out their imaginations.

It was worth every penny.

My chest tightens, seeing the rickety ladder that's aged with time. It's dark in the opening above me, and I fold my arms across my chest.

"Come down here, Tatum."

I don't hear anything, and I feel my cock twitch between my legs. Something about him pushing my buttons...

Laura never did this. She was always so agreeable.

But Tatum. He's not. He's the opposite in every way. He lives to make me feel things.

My hands grasp on to the rickety wood and I pull myself up, memories flooding me as I ascend. Memories of catching Diablo and Angelo up here —Diablo with a lighter, Angelo with his flowers.

My sons.

My life.

My head peers over the edge of the floor, and I see Tatum seated, leaning against the wall, a small smile on his face.

"You actually climbed up here," he says with a grin, taunting me.

I pull myself the rest of the way up, my knees hitting the rough wood floor. It's a large space, big enough for two kids to spend their days here. I look over and see the small brown couch I had hefted into this space years ago, and the small ratty rug that Tatum is lounging on, the corners burned from Diablo trying to light it on fire.

"You weren't in my room," I say.

"I know."

My tongue slides across the front of my teeth. "And yet, here you are."

He inhales deeply and our eyes meet in a clash of desire and yearning. "And yet, here I am."

I lean back on my heels and my hands fist on my thighs.

My eyes rove over him, drifting from his heaving chest to his loose pants, the way his cock strains against the fabric.

I reach out and grab on to his ankle, pulling him toward me. He sags down the wall and lets out a low moan.

"This would have been more comfortable in my bed."

"We can go there later," he tells me. "You can't tempt me with a chase and then expect me to just obey."

I lean over him, the sides of my jacket bracketing him, and I reach down and cup his cock through his pants.

He gasps, his eyes widening, his cheeks turning a pretty shade of pink.

“Anthony,” he moans as I stare down at him, my eyes taking in his pretty face, his lean torso, the way it labors with breath just for me.

“Anthony, how can you...how can you say you’re straight when you keep touching my cock?”

My eyes meet his once more, my hand continuing to squeeze his hard dick.

“Is this what you want to be discussing right now?” I ask, and he bites his plump bottom lip and nods.

My hand falls from him, and I watch as his eyelids flutter.

I want him naked. I want to see every part of him.

“Tell me,” he says as I start to pull his pants off, exposing each inch of him to me, his cock making an appearance, angry, red, and leaking.

I wet my lips as I chuck his pants away and reach out for it again, squeezing the hard, warm length with my fingers.

“It’s simple. I want to own every part of you, Tatum,” I explain, my thumb rubbing across the wet tip of him. And it’s true. I don’t know how much of this is attraction or just pure obsession. Somehow, this smart, sassy guy walked into my life and tipped it sideways. And now I can’t get him off my mind.

It’s an itch that can’t ever be scratched. I need him etched on my skin.

I need to be buried inside his heart.

“I want you to eat, breathe, and sleep...me. My name.”

He moans as my hand leaves his cock and rucks his shirt up, taking it off and tossing it in a corner. He’s completely naked now, his nipples puckering in the cool air, his skin breaking out in goosebumps.

I want to consume him.

I’ve never related to the Big Bad Wolf more in my entire life.

My hands drag down his chest and stop at his hips, lifting him slightly. He’s malleable now, not a brat in sight.

Although, I do like the chase, the hunt.

Perhaps he’ll give that to me once more. So I can find him and tear him apart, piece by piece.

“But first, I want you begging,” I say lowly, and he nods, swallowing loudly. “You should have been in my room, Tatum. This would have all

been much more pleasant.”

“I can handle it. This is just fucking fine. If anything, it’s your knees that will give you trouble, old man,” he bites out with a laugh, but it quickly turns to a groan when I fist his cock and start to pump him.

“This old man,” I begin, my wrist twisting, “is going to make you beg.”

I lean over his straining dick and spit onto it, the wetness hitting him right at the tip. He watches it, his eyes intent on my hand working him, almost like he wants to remember this.

Good. He should remember. He needs to.

No one else will touch him. No one but me.

“And for your bratty comment, I’m not letting you come. Not here,” I tell him, and his eyes slam into mine.

“What? Why not?” he asks, his hips starting to arch up into my touch. He’s perfect. Everything about him is perfection.

“Because when I say to do something, I expect you to do it.”

“I’m not some loyal soldier, Anthony. I do what I want. I won’t be your puppet.”

My hand stills on his cock and I lean over him, his legs falling open even further. My face hovers over his and my hand reaches up to cup his neck. I squeeze gently, and he lets out a desperate moan.

“Tatum, you became mine the moment you taunted me with that sassy mouth. I own you. You’re mine.”

He blinks up at me and wets his lips. My eyes fall to that mouth again and for a moment, I almost lean down and kiss it, but instead, I press my lips to his exposed neck, sliding my mouth down to his pounding pulse point.

I let my lips hover there, just listening to him breathe before I sit up once more and grab on to his dick, spitting on it again. My hand shuttles up and down the straining length, watching intently as it leaks and listening as Tatum moans, his hips thrusting up to meet each stroke.

My free hand reaches down and gathers his balls, squeezing them gently. His eyes roll back into his head as I continue to work him right to the edge. I can feel when he’s starting to come. The way his breathing grows even more labored, the way his spread thighs tremble. With a pinch at the base of his balls, my hand falls from his dick, and I watch as he whimpers and writhes beneath me.

“Please,” he whispers, but I don’t let him have it. He doesn’t deserve it.

Making me chase him.

I never chase and I never kneel, and yet here I am, doing both.

I let my hands drag down his thighs and then I push his knees up to his chest, exposing his hole to me. He grabs on to them, anchoring himself, and my hands are free to cup his hips, my fingers spreading his cheeks open wider.

I've had anal sex, but never with another man. And yet, it doesn't bother me.

None of this does. It never has with Tatum.

It all makes absolute sense.

I lift him even further, his bottom half off the ground, his body folded in half. His ass is exposed and waiting, and for the first time in my life I want to taste him.

"Anthony," he whispers, confused and desperate.

And without a second thought, I bury my face in his ass and let my tongue lick up his crack.

He cries out at the unexpected intrusion. *Love when he makes those sounds*, I think as I do it again, this time letting the tip of my tongue slide along his rim.

He's almost sobbing now, his entire body shaking.

I hum in contentment at that, at watching him fall apart, and then I continue to tease him, my tongue lapping at his entrance before slipping inside. Just a taste, a taunt, as Tatum cries out, jerking beneath me. I do quite like that, love how he's lost his mind for me.

So I do it again, this time a little deeper. Tatum is almost sobbing in desperation now, and I have an unquenchable desire to watch him fall apart. Just from my tongue.

I slide in a little deeper, tasting him. Fucking him.

He's chanting my name now, begging, tears sliding down his pretty face.

God, what would it be like to spear my cock into him, to impale his tight little hole around me?

I feel that switch start to flip and my dick start to swell with the thought. He always does this.

It never fails.

He knows every button to push, just by being himself.

I've lost control.

My tongue slides even deeper and Tatum is clawing at the walls now, way past desperation and into pure nirvana now.

I should stop. Should give him some reprieve, but I don't let up. Not until he's shaking so hard his teeth clack from the force of it.

Only then do I lift my face from his ass and stare down at him.

His eyes are closed, tear tracks lining his skin.

"Please," he moans, and I lower him just enough to see his drooling cock.

I arch his hips up toward me and lick a stripe up the underside of his dick, making his head fall to the side, his chest heaving.

"Oh my god," he whispers as I do it again, sucking on his tip and letting myself taste a man for the first time.

Of course, it's perfect.

My obsession grows, blooming into something dangerous.

And yet still, I'm here, my mouth around his cock, not fucking him but torturing him.

Perhaps this is more pleasing than cutting out tongues and lopping off fingers.

Yeah, it definitely is.

I'd much rather be eating his ass and listening to him moan.

My mouth pops off his dick and I hold him there, half suspended in the air, watching as his eyelids blink open.

"Anthony?" he asks, almost delirious.

Slowly, I place his ass on the floor, his legs still sprawled out beside me.

I shrug off my coat with shaking fingers and set it near him.

"I'll meet you in my bedroom," I tell him, wondering for a moment if I'm making a mistake. But then I see that glint in his eye, and I bite back a smile.

He's starting to get mad, flustered. He didn't think I'd actually leave him hard and wanting.

Good, let him be upset.

I have things I want him to learn.

---

Tatum walks in wearing only my jacket and a frown on his face, those long legs eating up the space between us.

“You took my clothes, you asshole.”

I pull my glasses down my nose slightly and arch an eyebrow at him. I’m sitting up in bed, my bare legs settled on top of the comforter, clad in only my boxer briefs.

“Seems you were just fine. That jacket covers enough of you.”

He huffs and waves his hand around his face. “You...take those glasses off this instant. You’re far too sexy wearing them.”

I don’t listen, just push them back up my nose and force my gaze back to my phone.

I’m not actually working. I’ve just been waiting for him to return. And he has. Looking positively wrecked. But I don’t want him to know that. I want him to be even more flustered.

He huffs and then pulls the jacket tighter around him.

“I’ll just go sleep with Angel...”

My eyes flash to meet his. “Get your ass in bed,” I bite out. His cheeks redden, and I see that bit of willpower start to revolt. It wants out. He wants to disobey.

But then suddenly, the jacket falls from his shoulders and he walks to my bed. His cock is still hard, and I can see the red marks on his hips from where I grasped him while I feasted. The thought of how he tasted makes that switch start to flip again as he slips beneath the covers, turning his back to me. He lets out a long huff and then does it again, like a petulant child.

I bite back a smile as I set my phone down on the end table, my glasses beside it, then I turn off the light and lay my head on the pillow.

Tatum grumbles and then punches his pillow, shifting wildly under the sheets. He’s mad. I left him unfinished, left him hard and aching in that treehouse, making him walk back in only my jacket.

After a few moments, he turns over to face me, and I move my gaze so I can watch him.

“Fine, Mr. Costello. I get it. I’ll be where you want me to be, but never leave me halfway blinded from lack of orgasms. Now I’m just grumpy, and I can’t sleep.”

I huff a laugh and turn my body to face his.

“So you’ve learned your lesson?”

“Maybe. I won’t make any promises.”

“Come here,” I say lowly, and I can almost hear his eyes rolling. “Come here and I’ll help you come.”

He purses his lips. “I don’t want it anymore. I’m over it.”

I lean up on my elbow, my eyes taking him in. I can see the bulge beneath the covers, his hard dick trying to poke its way out.

“I’m sure you are. If you change your mind, I’ll be right here.”

I don’t move, just hover, watching as he fights it. And then with a moan, he’s on me, pressed up against my body, his hard cock humping my thigh.

It’s in that moment that I snap and roll us both over, my body splayed on top of his.

His fingers dig into my back and his legs wrap around my hips as we grind together, my arms bracketing his face as we just breathe each other in.

“Oh fuck,” he moans, rocking his hips up into mine. Our dicks slide together, and the way he feels against me makes something spark beneath my skin. I need something.

I want more. More from him. Everything he has to give.

“Fuck, please, Anthony. *Please.*”

I reach out and thread my hand into his hair, tugging roughly and biting down on his neck, marking him.

I want everyone who sees him to know who he belongs to.

“What do you need?” I ask lowly, my mouth against his ear.

“To come. Please,” he whispers, and I sit up abruptly, his legs splayed wide before me. With a heave, I flip him over. He starts to grind against the mattress before I reach out and lift his ass into the air. My thumbs spread him wide as I lower my face against his ass.

He’s whining now, his hands fisted in the covers as I start to eat him again.

I don’t think I got enough earlier.

I want to taste him as he comes.

My tongue thrusts into him, and he gasps, arching back into my face as much as he can. I keep myself inside him, fucking into him, making him whimper and moan. I don’t let up, don’t stop, just continue to eat at his greedy hole until he’s once more a writhing mess. I can hear his broken sobs, his desperate moans.

When I’m done torturing his ass, I flip him over and cover his cock with my mouth, using my hand to jerk him in time with each suck, feeling the way he starts to crest that inevitable hill. But this time, instead of stopping, I

let him explode in my mouth, his very essence hitting my tongue as he chants my name. I hold it there, collecting every drop until he's finally done, his body growing soft beneath mine, wrung out and satiated.

And then I meet his stare as I spit it into my hand and wrap it around my cock, jerking myself until I'm spraying his body with my release.

He watches it all through hooded eyelids, his chest heaving.

"I can't believe you just did that," he says softly. I let my hand fall from my dick as I stare down at him.

"Like I said, I own you, Tatum. I own your entire body."

He sighs as if that makes him happy and then throws an arm over his eyes.

"Yeah, I get it, Mr. Boss Man. You can suck my dick anytime."

I huff out an amused laugh and then fall down beside him. He turns and snuggles into me, his body still sticky from our mess, but I don't mind.

Tomorrow when we wake, I'll wash it off him in the shower.

And then maybe, I'll fuck that dirty little mouth.

My arms wrap around him as the two of us fall asleep.

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## 14

TATUM

I can't help but have a little skip in my step when I leave his room the next morning. He washed me in the shower, his hands sliding up and down my body, almost as if memorizing me. I feel the drag of his fingers across my skin even now.

And the way he pushed me to my knees and fucked my throat...

God, it won't ever grow old.

How did I ever think that my ex, Brayden, did it for me? A weak man, who is too afraid of being his true self, who was ashamed of me.

Anthony is unabashedly into me. I can tell. He says he's straight and yet he doesn't shy away from letting everyone know who I belong to.

Speaking of Brayden, he hasn't messaged me again, which is fine. I wouldn't mind never hearing from him again.

I grab my homework from my room—as it's nearing the end of the semester and I need to get my final projects and papers sorted—and make my way to the kitchen. As soon as I enter, I see Agatha bustling around, and standing at the island is Teddy in a frilly apron, a look of concentration on his face as he peers into the mixer.

"Oh my god," I say with a giggle as I set my computer and books on the island and make my way over to my bodyguard. "What are you doing, Teddy?" I flick the lace on his apron and he grunts.

He peers up at me before going back to work, ignoring me completely.

Agatha pipes up as she hands me a plate of small cakes on some kind of fine china I've never seen before.

"Teddy's a gem. He's been helping me make some British cakes for Anthony's visitor today. It has to be perfect. Kingston is British, you know?"

I don't know, but I can't peel my eyes away from Teddy. It brings a smile to my face and I feel another giggle bubble up inside of me.

"What kind of cakes?" I manage to ask.

"Well, this one is a bit of Victoria sponge. And this one is a lemon drizzle cake. Oh, and banoffee pie and seed cake."

Teddy points to another, and Agatha grins. "And Teddy's favorite, the scones."

Grabbing one of them, Agatha stops me before I can place it in my mouth.

"You don't eat this without jam and clotted cream, young man."

"Clotted cream?" I ask, never having heard of it.

"Yes, we had it imported from a friend just for this. It's not legal here, you know."

"Really?" I ask and then do as she instructs, placing the cream on and then the raspberry jam before popping it into my mouth. A groan escapes me, and I lean forward dramatically.

"Oh my god, this is amazing. Why is this illegal? Teddy, you're a genius."

His cheeks pinken, but he continues to focus on his baking.

A cup of tea in a matching china cup is set down in front of me, and I take a dainty sip. My pinkie finger even goes up while I drink. I can't help it.

"Glorious. Anthony's visitor won't be disappointed," I remark as I take another small cake from the plate and swallow it down. Good fuck, if I keep living here, I'm going to gain a hundred pounds.

*Worth it*, I think as I take another swig of the tea.

As I continue to pick at the plate of treats Agatha gave me, I focus on working on my homework. An hour later, Agatha breaks me out of my intense focus and gestures to the cake stand.

"Would you like to help me bring this in, dear?" she asks.

I stretch and I nod. "Did Kingston arrive yet?" I ask, thankful I remembered his name.

"Oh, yes. You just missed him. You were very absorbed in your homework."

As I pick up the platter, Teddy tutts at me.

I roll my eyes and grin at my friend. "I won't drop your creations, bud," I reassure him, following a bustling Agatha into Anthony's office. She's carrying a tray with tea, milk, and sugar as I follow behind with the cakes.

Anthony is seated in a chair opposite his guest, a handsome man who gives off a distinguished air. He's wearing a three-piece suit and has his legs crossed showing off very expensive shoes. His dirty-blond hair is parted on the side and his face is perfectly shaven. I can't help it when my eyes roam over him, taking him in.

I might be Anthony's, but I can appreciate a work of art when I see one.

"Thank you, Aggie," Anthony says as I set the cakes down on the coffee table, near Anthony's British visitor. She leans down and gives him a quick kiss on the cheek before adding, "Come and see me when you're done, young man. I have something for you."

"Will do, Ms. Aggie," the man says, and Agatha bustles out. I should follow her, but I don't. I'm too intrigued.

"And who's this?" Kingston asks, his accent thick and quite sexy.

"I'm Tatum," I say before Anthony can answer and then wave my hand at the cakes. "My bodyguard made these specifically for you. Would you like some?"

Anthony shifts behind me, but I ignore him, watching as the man smiles, his blue eyes twinkling.

"I would like that, thank you. Why don't you choose for me?"

I beam at him and then take a seat on the couch near him, piling up a plate of all my favorites and handing it to him. "Which one's your favorite?" he asks me, and I stare down at it, biting my lip.

"This one," I say, pointing to the Victoria sponge cake.

"By all means, then," he parts his lips, and I stare at him. Is he flirting with me? *Oh, how flattering*, I think as I pop the cake between his lips and watch as he chews. His eyelids flutter, and I hear Anthony grumble behind me.

I don't look though, just wait in anticipation as Kingston swallows.

"Wonderful," he says, licking his lips. He leans forward to pour himself a cup of tea and I peer over at Anthony. He's frowning, a hand rubbing ominously across his jaw.

“Tatum. Come here,” he says lowly, and Kingston chuckles.

I stand up and move toward him as he points to his lap.

I roll my eyes. “I mean, can you say please at least?”

Kingston bites back a cackle, and Anthony mutters under his breath. I don’t actually hear *please*, but he looks annoyed enough. So I settle on his thighs, his hand automatically going to my stomach and pulling me back against his chest.

Kingston grins at us as he takes a sip of his tea.

“Ah, I see.”

“Yes, you do see. Now, Kingston, can we get back to it?”

He nods as he pops another cake into his mouth. “These really are very good. Almost like I’m back home.”

“Hm,” Anthony replies, his hand moving under my shirt and making me shiver against him. “Kingston was Diablo and Angelo’s tutor. He came for a visit while in town.”

I nod, shifting a little on Anthony’s lap.

“That must have been fun. I’m sure you have a lot of stories.”

“I do,” he says with a chuckle. “Where is Angel anyway? I know Diablo is out of town.”

Anthony nods, his hand moving up to my nipple and plucking at it absently. It’s making me positively drool.

Suddenly, a secret door opens at the far end of the room, and Bane bursts through. Blood is spattered across his shirt, but of course, he most likely hasn’t noticed it as he makes his way quickly across the room.

Anthony sighs at the intrusion, and Kingston stands up, chuckling once more.

“I was wondering if I’d see you,” Kingston says, pulling Bane into a hug and clapping him on his back.

“Anthony tried to hide it from me, but news makes its way to me. I have my ways,” Bane says with a grin, pulling something out of his pocket and setting it into Kingston’s palm. “A gift. For my friend.”

Kingston glances down at it and then shakes his head, a smile pulling his lips up.

“Always so thoughtful,” he says, and Bane beams before turning to me.

“I didn’t forget about you, my little snack,” Bane says as he moves toward me, pulling something from his pocket.

Anthony grumbles again, but Bane just takes my hand and places something in it.

I peer down and see what it is. Another small bone.

“What is this?” I ask, turning it in my fingers.

“It’s a distal phalanx.”

My eyebrows rise, not sure what that means. Bane points at it and then beams once more, puffing up like a peacock. “It’s part of a thumb.”

I close my fingers around it. “Oh. Thank you. I love it.”

Bane blushes and then turns to Kingston. “Show them. I want them to see.”

Kingston holds up a chain with an eyeball dangling on the end of it, some kind of ornate piece that I’m sure Bane spent far too long on. And to be honest, besides the creepy eyeball in the middle, it’s quite nice. Bane has a talent for jewelry.

“You should put it on,” Anthony says, and Kingston’s eyes slam into his.

“I should.”

“I can help,” Bane offers and takes the chain, placing it around Kingston’s neck. It dangles against his nicely pressed shirt, and I bite back a laugh.

I can’t believe this is my life. That I’m entangled with a mafia man and his family, where there are torture basements, secret doors, and men who give me thumb bones as a sign of affection. And yet, the way Anthony is still touching me, the way he possesses me makes me never want to leave.

I never want to leave.

Anthony’s nose drifts up my neck, his lips at my ear. I can hear him breathe. It’s steady and sure, so calming.

“It looks nice,” Bane says and then reaches out and touches the small dangling eye. “Don’t you think so, Boss?”

Anthony doesn’t move his face from my neck. “Yes. It does.”

“Would you like some cakes, Bane? Ms. Agatha outdid herself.”

“She did,” I say. “And Teddy. Apparently, he’s a master baker.” I turn slightly and glance at Anthony. “Did you know this?”

“I didn’t.”

“Hm, well, you should compliment him. I think he’d be very happy with that.”

Anthony hums under his breath and then looks at Bane and Kingston. “Why don’t you two go find Angelo. I need a moment alone with Tatum.”

Bane groans. “Aw, come on. Can’t we watch? I know it’s gonna be hot.” He turns to Kingston and winks. “Their chemistry is off the charts.”

Anthony’s hands tighten on me, and I feel my cock perk up between my legs.

“Is that so?” Kingston asks, settling back on the couch. “I do love a good show.”

Anthony huffs and then reaches out and cups my cock through my pants. I gasp and then arch up into it, the mood suddenly changing. The air thickens and the tension snaps between us.

“I think this one will just be for me,” Anthony hisses. “Just for me.”

Bane shifts on his feet with a pout, and Kingston nods, standing up once more and placing his hand on Bane’s back.

“We’ll go find Angel and maybe stop and thank Teddy for his creations.”

“If we have to,” Bane pouts, peering over his shoulder as he goes, wanting to catch a glimpse of the action, but Anthony waits, massaging my cock through my pants until they’re finally gone.

As soon as the door clicks shut, Anthony unzips my pants and pulls my cock out, grabbing onto it and squeezing.

“You can’t help yourself, can you? Making everyone want you.”

I moan and then shake my head, staring at those tattooed fingers against my cock. It’s so hot. He’s so fucking hot. “It’s called flirting and it’s harmless.”

“And yet, they can’t help but want you. To fuck you. Own you.”

I arch into his palm and then gasp when his thumb brushes over the swollen tip of me.

“It doesn’t matter though, does it? Because I belong to you,” I reply and then lean back and rub my nose against his neck, inhaling the scent of him. Manly, dark.

Perfection.

“Maybe I should call them back in and let them watch.”

I groan at the thought. I’ve never been into public sex before, but for some reason, when it’s Anthony doing it, claiming me, I want it. I want everyone to see how he owns me in that moment, how he makes me lose my fucking mind.

"I don't...you should meet with your friend. He came all this way."

He hesitates, his hand stilling on my dick. "You want me to wait? I've never known you to have patience."

"I just," I groan when he reaches down and cups my balls gently. "I just feel bad, you know?"

"Don't feel bad. Kingston can wait. Now stand up and take your pants off."

I groan as I do, pushing my pants down my legs and feeling them bunch around my ankles.

"All the way. I want you spread."

"Why?" I ask as I kick them off and they puddle near the couch.

"Because. I. Said. So."

I roll my eyes as he grabs on to my hips and pulls me into him, his eyes meeting mine. They spark, dark and erotic. He wants me, I can see it. It's as clear as day.

"I want you bent over my desk, feet spread apart. As far as they can go."

I nod and do as he says, leaning over the cool wood and spreading my legs as far as they're able.

Anthony moves up behind me, humming appreciatively at the sight before him. His hand reaches between my legs, grazing over my balls as he takes a hold of my cock and pulls it from where it's pressed against the desk. It's now perpendicular with the floor, aching with the need to come.

He reaches into a drawer and pulls out some lube, wetting his hand and stroking my cock once more, making me nearly squeal.

Oh my god, this never gets old. Why does this never get old?

He torments me this way for a solid minute, his hand shuttling slowly up and down my dick before his hand drags across my taint and through my crack. His fingers massage my hole, a dark chuckle moving through his chest when he hears me moan and watches the muscle flex under his ministrations.

"You like this? Of course you do. You're so greedy."

I nod, my cheek rubbing against the wood, sticking to some papers. But I don't even care. I just want him to fuck me. I want him to take that big cock and shove it right inside of me. I want him to keep it up there for hours.

I'd cockwarm him any day.

But he doesn't give me what I want. He spends what feels like hours teasing me, dragging his hand along my cock before pressing gently against my hole. Over and over again until I'm groaning mindlessly.

Begging.

*Fuck me. Please. Please.*

Finally after what feels like days, he pushes two fingers into my hole, and at this point, my body doesn't even resist him. I just take him all the way to his knuckles, his wrist twisting inside of me. Searching. Hunting.

When he finally finds it, I come off the desk, my back bowing from the pleasure shooting through me.

"Anthony!" I shout, my fingers scrambling on the desk, trying to hold on to anything to anchor me. He chuckles again, his fingers massaging my prostate, not letting up until I'm fucking back against his hand, wanting more and yet never wanting this to end.

"Such a good boy for me," he mutters as he continues to make me breathless.

His free hand cups my straining cock, and he starts to press in time with each stroke, making my eyes cross. I don't last. Just come on a low moan, my throat closing on a gasp. I shoot directly onto the floor, the orgasm endless, but still, he doesn't let up. He just continues to work my dick and my prostate until I'm crying out, begging for him to stop.

But he doesn't. "You have one more for me," he says, and I shake my head, still fucking back against his fingers.

I don't know how he makes everything so good, especially as someone who's apparently never had gay sex before. I've been with plenty of men, but none have been as skilled as him. None even compare.

Anthony is on a different planet altogether.

His fingers continue to pump my oversensitive dick and push against my swollen prostate.

"One more, Tatum. One more," he demands.

I moan when I feel it, a low buzzing in my spine, moving quickly to my balls. They're empty, and yet my second orgasm moves through me, a quick and painful thing. My cock jerks, cum spilling languidly over the tip and dripping to the floor. Anthony huffs in appreciation and then as my orgasm comes to an end, he pulls his fingers out of me slowly.

"Good. Good boy," he says as his hand lets go of my softening cock.

I wet my lips, unable to move. I've never in my life had two orgasms like that. I feel like I lost my soul between the two. It's puddled on the floor between my legs.

I feel him start to wipe me up and I don't move, unable to, my body boneless.

I hear Anthony make a call and then the door opens, and still I just lie there, my bottom half exposed, my eyes shut.

"Ah, looks like you exhausted him," Kingston says, his British accent full of amusement.

Anthony grunts and then pulls me up and into his arms, wrapping a blanket around me as he goes. He strides to the couch, and I nuzzle into his chest, feeling content and satiated for the first time in hours.

My hand moves up to his beating heart and I rest it there, letting myself drift off for a moment while Kingston and Anthony speak.

*I'll make sure I get him back,* I think.

I'll make him just as mindless as I was minutes ago.

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As Kingston and Anthony converse, I eventually come to, blinking my eyes open and shifting uncomfortably on Anthony's lap. I stretch and wet my dry lips, finding myself waking slowly.

The first thought in my head is that I need to get back to work on my homework. The second is that I could use a dose of Angel at this moment. I haven't seen him all day.

He's been more distant lately and even more spacey.

It has something to do with that secretive look he had while chatting on the phone the other day. I'm sure of it. It makes me worried for him. He's such an innocent soul, so easily corruptible.

But before I can shift off Anthony's lap, and make my excuses, I hear the two of them discussing Angel and Mikhail.

"It's done?" Kingston asks.

"It is. The paperwork has been signed."

I can tell that Anthony is careful about what he says, not sure how much I'm taking in at the moment, but I get the gist. Angel won't be here much longer. The business deal has gone through.

My chest tightens and I feel my body heat in frustration.

I know Anthony thinks he's doing what's best. He's explained this all to me, and I heard every word, but it seems so callous. So cold. I would never marry my child off for a business deal. I would rather die.

I peel Anthony's hands off of me and push myself up, away from him. I grab on to the blanket, tightening it around my hips and making my way over to my pants. Stupid man, thinking he could distract me with a nice hand job and some filthy words.

Behind the desk, I pull my pants up my legs and then without a backward glance, I make my way out. I can feel Anthony's eyes on me as I walk from his office, but I refuse to look at him.

He knows my thoughts on the matter.

And I really don't want to ruin my post-orgasm mood by thinking of my best friend being sold off and languishing in a loveless arranged marriage.

"Angel?" I ask one of the soldiers guarding the house, and they nod toward the garden. Of course that's where he is.

As I make my way toward him, Teddy appears by my side.

I glance up at him and see a bit of flour on his cheek. I reach up and brush it away.

"There, just a bit of leftovers from baking."

His cheeks flush, and I can feel his gaze on me through the sunglasses. I wrap my arm around his back and squeeze him, his big body swaying into mine for a moment, but almost as soon as it starts, it's over. He steps away from me and continues to look around, as if assessing possible threats. Not that there's been any issues since the explosion when Sabrina was visiting. Since then, Anthony has doubled the guards and has been vigilant in making sure that we're safe.

But like Agatha whispered to me the other day, this can't go on forever. Something has to give.

And I think what gives is Angel and the added protection Mikhail brings to this family.

My sweet, tender-hearted friend.

"Did you know that Anthony is marrying Angel off to some man for a business deal?" I blurt to Teddy.

He doesn't answer, and my mood sours.

"Anyways, it doesn't matter. I just want to hang out with Angel for a bit and pretend nothing bad is going to happen."

We trudge on and I finally find him with Casey, who is donning a flower crown and bending down to eat something from a picnic basket.

“Oh,” I say with a small laugh. “That looks amazing.”

Casey rolls his eyes as he stands and then huffs. “I can’t say no to him.”

Angel beams up at his bodyguard. “He cannot.”

“Did Bane leave? I know that he came out to visit you.”

“Oh yes, he’s back underground. He can’t stand the sun for long,” Angel says as he comes up to me and tucks a flower behind my ear. “Anyways, I had a lovely time catching up with Kingston. He said he met you.”

“Yep, he was your tutor?”

“Yes, and let me tell you, he was the reason for my sexual awakening.”

Casey sighs and then plugs his ears. “I really don’t need to hear this.”

Angel swats at him playfully. “You’re just jealous it wasn’t you who sparked the desire. It’s mainly because you weren’t with us then. But Kingston was. I spent hours ogling that man. He’s hot, isn’t he? And that accent. Gah.”

I grin at my friend and nod. “Yeah, he’s a hottie.”

Angel beams like the sun and then leans toward me. “Don’t let my dad hear you say that. He’ll blow a gasket. He’s already growly enough.”

“Yeah, I know,” I mutter, and my ass twinges slightly. “He’s already proven how much he disapproves of me smiling at anyone but him.”

Angel’s cheeks flush and he turns away from me, getting back to gardening. He pulls on some gloves and kneels down, working on a small patch, pulling weeds and plucking dead flowers from the blooms.

I can’t believe he’s going to be married to someone who doesn’t love him.

My frown deepens, and I huff loudly.

“What?” Angel asks, peering up at me. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” I say, not wanting to wreck his afternoon. Although, mine surely has been. No matter how much Anthony tries to placate me and fuck me into submission, I can’t get over this. I just can’t.

It makes me rage just thinking about it.

Angel puts down his shovel and places his hands on his worn jeans. “I know what this is about, Tatum, and like I’ve said before, I’m fine. I am. My dad has already told me about it. We’re going to have a ceremony here in a few days.”

My mouth falls open as he pushes himself to his feet and makes his way up to me.

“That soon?” I rasp out.

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me?” I ask, my body warming in frustration, my stomach clenching uneasily.

“Because I knew how upset you’d be,” he says, grasping my forearms lightly. “And I’m happy. I know you don’t believe it, but I am. I’m excited for this new chapter in my life.”

“But you don’t even know him!” I nearly shout, and Angel shakes his head, his cheeks flushing.

“But I do. Kind of. We’ve been...” he lowers his voice. “Speaking.”

“Is that who you’ve been talking to?”

“Yeah.”

My eyes widen, and I let him continue. “It’s a bit of a secret. My dad can’t ever know, but we’ve been chatting. Me and Mikhail. He’s...” He clutches me a little tighter. “He’s beautiful.”

I don’t believe it. How can I? He doesn’t know the man. They haven’t even met. So what if he’s been speaking to him on the phone? That means nothing. Right?

“I know what you’re thinking, but my dad has spoken to me about this arrangement and I’ve told him it’s okay, that we can go ahead with it. I really am happy about it.”

“But...but what about finishing school?”

“I’m online. I’ll be fine. I can finish out the year strong.”

“Will this guy let you continue on with your studies? I know you want to get your master’s.”

He lets out a little laugh. “Of course. He’s not archaic. He’s kind and sweet. He wants me just as much as I want him.”

Something niggles in my belly, something wrong and off, but I can’t put my finger on it. Then again, who wouldn’t want Angel? Maybe I’m just being illogically possessive of my friend. I don’t want him to end up hurt. I might have to burn the world down—or at least enlist Bane’s help to do so.

“Okay, if you’re sure.”

He beams. “I am. And I wanted to tell you sooner, once I knew the contract had been signed, but my dad made me promise to keep it to myself.”

“How outrageous. How long have you known?”

“Just a few days. I really did want to tell you. My dad just didn’t want you to know. Not yet.”

My lips curl down. “But now I know.”

“Well, it’s good because tomorrow I get fitted for a wedding suit and I will be purchasing some lingerie.” His cheeks darken as he peers up at me. “I—I’m going to have sex, Tatum. Oh my god.”

I clutch at him tightly and then pull him into a tight hug. “I’m glad you told me. I will murder your dad for keeping this from me. That must have been terrible, keeping this secret.”

“It was. I wanted to tell you forever. Well, it felt like forever. It was awful.”

“God. I hate your dad right now.” Angel snorts, and I squeeze him closely. “But I’ll be with you tomorrow. I’ll be there every step of the way. When does he arrive? Mikhail?”

“Day after tomorrow. I cannot wait to meet him in person.”

I nod and then link my fingers through his. “And when do you leave?”

His face falls slightly, but he perks up right away. “This weekend. Right after the ceremony. He’ll fly me to his...our home. I really wish I could stay longer. Diablo said he’s coming for the wedding, even though my dad told him to stay away for his safety. But he never listens.”

“Good for him. That was a ridiculous request.”

“Yeah, but...please don’t worry. Casey comes with me. It was part of the deal. He’ll be there, watching out for me, if things go wrong. Which they won’t. I promise.”

I feel something ugly shift inside of me. Not jealousy, but worry.

This can’t be good, it really can’t. And yet, how can I not be happy for my friend? He’s excited about this future he’s going to build with a man he thinks he’s in love with.

I can be supportive. I can. Even if I disagree.

“I want to come visit you. Right away. As soon as I can.”

He nods and then starts to bounce on his toes. “I honestly can’t wait to have my asshole obliterated.”

I let out a laugh and he joins me, the two of us wheezing until our eyes leak with tears.

## TATUM

Mikhail arrives two days later. He cuts through the room with his expensive suit and shoes. He's tall with short brown hair and a square jaw, his blue eyes alert and sharp. Despite his outward appearance, strong and handsome, I don't trust him. The way he moves, the way he speaks is all so cold and calculating.

And yet, Angel sees none of it. He just blushes and fawns over him, clearly besotted with his soon-to-be groom. The wedding is tomorrow, and I've been avoiding Anthony, choosing to spend as much time as I can with my friend, helping him pack and pick out racy lingerie. But even when I'm with him, I can see that his mind is miles away. And when he leaves my side, he spends far too much energy trailing after Mikhail.

Mikhail, who spares him glances and small touches, but never giving him more.

*He's just shy,* Angel said.

I don't think that's it at all. I have a terrible feeling about this entire thing.

A very bad, no-good feeling.

This is not a man in love. This is a man who is looking to get something and that something is not Angel's heart.

I try to tell Anthony, but he dismisses me.

I try to tell Angel, once more, but he just clasps my face in his hands and shakes his head. “I’ll be fine. I’m happy.”

So I spend the night before his wedding in his bed, holding my friend close as I send up a prayer for his happiness. A prayer that he will find true love at the end of all this.

---

The day of the wedding is chaos. It’s a small affair and heavily guarded. Only people on the guest list are allowed in. At most, there are fifty people here, five of which are Ben and his partners, Cash and Ford, as well as Ben’s dad, Dean and his boyfriend, Avery. Diablo and Skylar are here as well, the two of them the funniest, most oddly paired couple I’ve ever seen. I can tell that Anthony is upset that his other son is here, not that he’s unhappy to see him, just that it’s one more precious thing he has to protect.

Thankfully Angel beams when he sees his twin and cuddles up next to him while I go in search of Ben.

As soon as I see my friend, standing with Cash and Ford protectively on either side of him, I jump into his arms and smash my face into his neck. He stumbles under my weight as I peck kisses to his cheeks.

“You have been avoiding me!” I chastise loudly, and Ben just rolls his eyes, trying to get me off of him.

“I’ve been busy,” he grunts and then blushes when Cash and Ford each place a hand on his shoulders, their eyes on me. Both are incredibly handsome, in a rugged older-man way. I can see why Ben fell and fell hard. And I also know why he’s been missing.

He’s been very busy getting railed into next week. I’m surprised he got out of bed to come here, if I’m honest.

“I know you’ve been, but I’ve missed you.”

“Me too. I did try to visit once, but Anthony told me I wasn’t allowed in.”

“What? Why?”

“Too dangerous at the time apparently. Something about a bomb.”

I roll my eyes and then hop off my friend and cup his cheeks. He looks just as amazing as usual, with his styled brown hair and eyes, his skin slightly tan as if he’s been sitting outside. I can see the bite marks on his

neck despite trying to hide them with the collar of his shirt, and I smile inwardly.

Yeah, you get it, Ben-Ben. You little slut.

"Well, I'm glad you're here now. Anyways, have you met Angel's... intended?"

Ben snorts. "That sounds so old-fashioned."

"I know. It's so dumb. Can you believe this is even a thing these days?"

Ben shrugs. "I mean, yeah. With the mob, anything is possible, I guess."

I sigh at his logic. Of course he's challenging me and yet still, the words tumble from my mouth. "I'm worried about him, Ben. I'm serious. I think this is very bad."

"Yeah, me too, but he looks so happy," Ben replies, turning his gaze to Angel, who is wearing flowers in his hair, looking positively angelic in his white flowy suit. Mikhail is a lucky man, even if he is currently ignoring his future husband. He's speaking with Luca, their heads bent low, their faces both serious.

I don't know what they're discussing, but it better not be business on the day of their wedding. That asshole.

"He better be happy, or I'll fly there myself and rip Mikhail apart, mob boss or not," I grumble, and Ben chuckles.

"Yeah, I'll join you. Cash and Ford too." He nods toward the refreshment table, obviously wanting something to drink and then asks, "And how is it with Anthony? Angel tells me you've been busy pushing his buttons."

I flush and peer over at my friend. "Yeah, that's one word for it."

Ben holds out his fist, and I bump it. "Seems we like older men."

"They do it better."

We both grin at each other as we grab drinks, and I glance over toward the man who I'm still *very* upset with.

He's talking with a tall, dark-haired and bearded man, someone I don't recognize. The regal man is standing with a shorter guy who has a mop of curly blond hair and piercing blue eyes. I'm so intrigued by the couple and the energy that's radiating off them, that I make my way over to where they're standing as Ben moves toward Angel.

When I finally come to a stop near them, I incline my head toward the shorter blond man and grin.

“Hello,” I interrupt, and Anthony and the taller man’s conversation tapers off.

“Hello,” he says and then extends his hand. “I’m Matty. Anthony was just telling us all about you, Tatum.” He has a British accent much like Kingston’s, and I wonder if they know one another.

I turn my gaze up to the man we’re speaking about and scowl. The taller man chuckles and runs a hand over his beard.

“Seems you have a firecracker on your hands,” the man says, also with a British accent, and then nods toward me. “I’m Sebastian LeClerc. Nice to meet you, Mr. Barlowe.”

I nod and then wave my hand among them. “And how do you know Anthony?”

Sebastian rolls his lips between his teeth and then answers, “We’re old friends. We wouldn’t have come, but we were in the area when Anthony called. Matty insisted we stop by.”

“Because it’s polite,” Matty chides him.

“If you say so.” His stern expression softens as he gazes at his husband. “But yes, Anthony and I have had some business together in the past.”

Matty snorts, and I meet his sparkling gaze.

“Yes, but all business is above board now, right?” Matty asks.

Sebastian leans toward his partner, the one he clearly adores and caresses his cheek. “Of course, my love.”

I can feel the adoration radiating off of them both, and I scowl once more at Anthony. Even if Sebastian is a bit rude, he clearly worships the ground that Matty walks on. This is what Angel should be marrying into. Not some Russian man who is avoiding his intended at all costs and barely even glances at him.

He is not the man Angel described to me earlier. Mikhail doesn’t seem to care a lick about Angel and isn’t shy about letting that be known.

“Come on, Tatum,” Matty says. “This conversation is a little bit boring to me. If I hear the word knife one more time, I’m going to run away.”

Sebastian scoffs, and I nod in agreement. “Yes, they’re both terribly old and boring.”

I reach up and casually stroke my cheek with my middle finger, making sure it’s aimed right at Anthony. I can feel his frown as I link my arm with Matty’s and pull him away.

Sebastian starts to follow, but Matty stops him.

“I’ll just be right over here. I’ll be fine.”

Sebastian grumbles but does as Matty asks. As soon as we’re out of range, Matty leans toward me and asks lowly, “So, tell me all the gossip. Sebastian said this is an arranged marriage? I didn’t know those were still a thing.”

I frown and then nod. “I know we don’t know one another, but you seem like someone I can trust and I have a lot to bitch about. No one else cares to listen.”

“Oh, I know all about keeping secrets, and I’m a great listener,” he says, grinning at me. Something is open and kind about his face, and I can totally see how he bagged a man as dangerous as Sebastian looks.

“Do these secrets have anything to do with your man?”

“Oh yes.” He pretends to zip his mouth and then gestures for me to continue on.

“Alright...” I begin, dropping my voice even lower as we move toward the gardens. The ceremony is set to start in an hour so we have plenty of time. “Let me tell you everything...”

---

Angel looks beautiful standing in front of all of the guests, his hands clasped in Mikhail’s. He’s smiling beautifully, his eyes a little wet while Mikhail stands there stoic and unmoving. But Angel doesn’t seem bothered by the lack of affection.

I am though.

I am *furious*.

My hands are clasped tightly in my lap, and I force my face to remain neutral when all I really want to do is pull my friend away from that awful man and hide him away.

I can’t, though. I’m sure Angel wouldn’t appreciate the scene that would make.

I let my gaze wander over to Bane, who is sitting a few seats down, and he waggles his fingers at me, Kingston seated next to him, that eyeball pendant dangling from his neck.

I don’t know if he ever took it off, probably just paraded it around since Bane clasped it around his neck.

I blow Bane a kiss and then turn my eyes back to Angel at the makeshift altar overflowing with blooms from the garden, as they both repeat their vows and then lean forward to kiss. It's quick and cold, nothing passionate about it. And even though I shift angrily in my seat, my body vibrating with frustration, Angel seems unperturbed.

He just turns around, facing us all, and lifts their linked hands in the air, beaming with tears tracking down his cheeks.

I don't even look at Anthony. I can't. I will gouge out his eyeballs.

But I can feel his gaze moving from his son to me. Diablo is sitting in the front row, twitching nervously and whispering continuously to Skylar. I bet he's seeing what I am. I know he and Angel are close. They're twins after all.

They have an innate connection.

I'll have to chat with him when I can. I was so busy filling Matty in on all my theories that I haven't had a chance to chat with Angel's brother.

Anthony leans over to me, his lips brushing against me softly. Even though I'm furious, his proximity makes me shiver. "You can't stay mad forever."

"Watch me," I hiss and then smile at Angel when he meets my stare.

"Thank you," he mouths, and I know he means thank you for behaving. I didn't jump up and protest at all. I sat there like a good friend and watched him sign his life away.

He and Mikhail walk arm in arm off to the side to sign the marriage certificate to make it official, while everyone starts to stand, making their way to the area where food will be served. Guards are omnipresent, guns slung on their backs as they keep watch.

I realize that if anyone were to strike, today would be the day. We're all here.

And yet, I feel safe. Mikhail came with his own army. They're dangerous, cruel. I can feel it.

For one brief moment, I understand why Anthony thought this would be best for his sweet Angelo, and yet I'm angry all the same.

I'd never. Never in my life. Angel would have been safe at home.

This was more than just safety. It was business as well.

Anthony gained something from this, and I can't let that go.

I stand up quickly and make my way over to Diablo and Skylar, who are standing near a table of food.

“Hello, sorry to interrupt. I’m Tatum. I’m friends with Angel.”

Diablo’s eyes sweep over me and they narrow. “Yeah, he’s told me about you.”

He folds his arms across his chest, and I lean a little closer. “Are you just as mad as I am?”

“Oh, more so. My dad better watch out,” Diablo grumbles, and I sigh in relief. At least someone is on my side. I’m not alone in this. “And my brother’s new husband better as well. I will cut him to pieces if he harms him or makes him sad.”

“Diablo,” Skylar grumbles above him, but Diablo ignores him.

“I’ll let you come with me to do that, if you’d like. I can let you borrow one of my saws.”

“Perfect,” I say without hesitation and then feel Anthony move up behind me, his hand going to my waist.

I wiggle out of his touch, and his teeth grind, which causes Diablo to grin evilly at his father.

“See you’ve met your match, Daddy-o.”

Anthony’s eyes flick to his son, and he shakes his head. “You shouldn’t even be here. I explicitly forbade you.”

“And yet, here I am.”

“We’ll be leaving tonight. Don’t worry, Boss. I’ve got him,” Skylar chimes in, his voice low and calm.

Diablo huffs and then pokes at Skylar’s chest. “I know how to protect myself, thank you very much.”

Skylar looks down at him and ruffles his hair. “You do, little brat.”

Diablo’s cheeks heat and then he glowers at his father. “I’ll be keeping an eye on Angel, old man. If this goes badly...”

“It won’t,” Anthony bites out, and Diablo narrows his eyes even more, not quite sure.

“Well, I hope for your sake it goes as planned. I’d hate to see Angel’s beautiful soul turned ugly by this.”

I see Anthony’s face darken. Good. Let him worry. Let him think seriously about what he’s done.

I step away from the three of them, letting them catch up, finding myself in search of someone or something to take my mind off my friend who is now married.

And yet, I don’t find it.

I wander the gardens alone.

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# 16

## ANTHONY

My skin vibrates and pricks in frustration.

I haven't had Tatum in two days. Haven't touched him, held him, fucked him. He's been avoiding me, spending all his time with Angel, barely making eye contact with me.

I feel the absence of him, of my obsession, palpably.

It bothers me that he's angry with me. He has no idea the struggle I went through to make this happen with Angel and Mikhail, the ethical dilemma I contemplated while Tatum slept beside me.

This is my son. I love him and I want him to be happy.

But I also want him safe.

And he'll be safe with Mikhail. Just like Diablo is with Skylar. Plus, Angel will have Casey with him. He will have someone looking out for him and reporting back to me.

But I know nothing will go wrong. Mikhail is as invested in this as I am. He wants this to work.

After everyone's left my place—the guards thinning out, Diablo and Skylar heading back to Wales, Angel and Mikhail setting off in his private jet to the East Coast—I'm left alone in this cavernous house. Tatum has made it clear he has no intention of sleeping with me tonight. I found him in Angel's room, glowering at me as he tucked himself under the covers.

I was not invited in.

So, I moved to my bedroom without a fight, showered and slid naked beneath my covers. I have no one to spend time with now.

I should call Bane and have him come up here to keep me company, but the thought of talking with him after the long day I've just had sounds miserable.

I could search out Sebastian and Matty, but both retired to their room earlier, a mischievous gleam in their eyes. I know what they'll be up to when the door finally shuts.

I fall against my pillow and stare up at the ceiling, my thoughts swirling obsessively.

Things were so much easier with Laura. Even when Luca entered the equation, it was far less complicated than with Tatum.

He's the single most infuriating person I've ever met. And yet, he sets my entire soul on fire.

I burn for him.

For the first time since Laura died, I want to pull out my camera and photograph him. I want to watch as his image appears on the photographic paper, inch by inch. That playful glint in his eye, the set of his shoulders, those plump, kissable lips.

My eyes flutter closed, and I force myself to drift off, imagining it, inhaling and exhaling deeply, my thoughts moving from my late wife to Tatum.

Tatum.

Even in my dreams he haunts me, consumes me. I can hear his voice, smell his scent, feel the way he moves across my skin as he straddles me, his fingers threading with mine. I arch up and let him have me, missing his touch the longer he lingers in my dreams.

My eyelids flutter open when I hear my name.

*Anthony.*

As I slowly wake, I see the object of all my obsession hovering over me, his hair falling into his face, his eyes sparkling with something mischievous.

My hands reach to touch him, but I suddenly realize that I can't move. My wrists have been handcuffed to the bedpost.

I yank at them, my eyes widening. Tatum just tutts at me, like I'm some spoiled child.

“Now, now, Anthony. No need to get so feisty. I got these handcuffs from Bane. Bomb proof, he said.” He runs his hands down my skin, his nails rough against my heaving chest.

“Let me go, Tatum,” I grind out, my voice rough and angry. He tied me up. That little shit tied me up while I was sleeping and subconsciously, I let him.

I probably even helped him, I was so desperate to have him again.

He taps his lips with a finger. “Um. No. Not happening.”

He tweaks my nipple roughly and my nostrils flare.

“Tatum, you have no idea what you’re doing,” I warn, my anger building, and yet that switch has flipped and I feel my cock perk up despite it all.

“But I really do know. I have so many ideas, Anthony. I’m so mad at you. I have sat for two days thinking up ways to make you pay.”

I huff and yank on my restraints once more, but they don’t budge. And if what he’s said is true, then they won’t. Bane has a knack for collecting impenetrable things.

Handcuffs would be one of them.

I crane my head to the right and see the pink fuzzy fabric lining the insides of the metal cuffs and give in to a small, aggravated laugh.

Of course he gave Tatum these ones. The two of them probably conspired at the wedding. I saw them hunched over and talking lowly. I barely stopped myself from walking up to the two of them and yanking Tatum away. I know Bane has an unhealthy obsession with him.

Not that mine is healthy, but still. He’s mine.

I found him first.

*Mine.*

“We’ve discussed this,” I say as Tatum tweaks my nipple again, harder this time, making me hiss. “But you didn’t get your way, so now you’re acting out.”

Tatum’s eyes flash and then he reaches for something behind him. He pulls out a silk cloth and waggles it in front of my face.

“I think I may have to gag you, Mr. Costello. I don’t want you to speak. At all. Unless it’s to beg me. I’m honestly just here to make you suffer.”

My cheeks heat when I see the lube in his hand and a small dildo in the other.

That little shit is going to fuck me while I'm tied up and possibly gagged. My admiration for him grows, and I feel my cock jerk between my legs. I like it when he takes charge. Love the fierceness in his gaze.

It makes me want him all the more.

My little kitten has claws.

"Just know this, Tatum," I bite out, my chest heaving as he straddles my thighs and pours lube onto my hard length. "When I'm free of these restraints, you will regret this."

"Oh, how scary," he teases and then grabs on to my cock roughly, making my breath come out in a hiss. Tatum is stronger than he looks. "I'm so worried."

He twists his hand up my dick and then back down, his touch setting off an inferno within me. It's been two days of nothing. Of course my body is responding.

And my heart. He's unstoppable in this moment.

I like seeing his claws, seeing him take what he wants.

His hand slides down to my balls and tugs on them roughly, making me grunt, my thighs falling open a little more. I should make him work for this. I should make him fucking work for the things he wants. Nothing in life is free.

My legs suddenly snap closed, and I hold his hand tightly between my thighs. He tries to wrench it free, but I hold him there for a few tense seconds.

His eyes flash up to meet mine, and he shifts up my body, his face suddenly hovering over my own.

"You can't just let me win, can you?"

"Never," I say.

His lips brush against my mouth, and my entire body tenses up at the sensation. His mouth lowers further and further until I can taste him, can feel his very essence being breathed into me.

I part my lips and lean up, capturing his mouth with my own, thrusting my tongue into him, tangling with his for just a second before he pulls away. He's panting now, his breathing labored.

"I will tie your legs down. Let me go. Bane gave me rope. Don't make me resort to that."

I huff and set my head back on the pillow, letting out a deep exhale. My legs spread slightly and his hand slips free.

He wets his lips, his eyes sliding down to my mouth again and then he's on me once more, his hands in my hair as he attacks my mouth. Our tongues thrust together dangerously as we feast. His little mewls set me ablaze, and I feel my cock leaking against my stomach as he continues to kiss me and rut against me. He carries on until we're both breathless, until the entire room spins and wobbles.

And it's only then that he finally breaks free and sits up, slightly dazed.

"Fuck you, Anthony. I had a plan."

I let out a dark chuckle, my lips swollen from his mouth.

"Get back to it then, my little light."

His eyes flick to mine and he nods, looking determined once more.

"Just so you know, this is punishment for marrying off your son and for not changing your mind about it."

"I've had far worse," I say and then wet my lips. "Do what you want."

He hesitates for a moment and then gets to work.

He squirts more lube onto my cock, working his hand up and down my shaft until I start to tremble. I wish I could control it, could shut myself down, but I can't. Not with him. Never with him. He lights something up within me, an ember fanned into an inferno.

"You know, Tatum," I breathe as his eyes flash from my cock to meet my stare. "The moment I met you, you crawled under my skin." His cheeks flush and his movements stutter. "I don't truly want you mad at me."

"But I am mad. So very mad," he replies, but his tone isn't convincing. It's wavering. He's breaking, falling apart at the seams.

"Let me go and let me fuck you. It's what you need. I can make this all better."

He frowns and then slaps my dick. Hard.

I let out a chuckle, and he narrows his gaze at me.

"I see what you're trying to do, Mr. Costello. And it won't work. I won't let you go until you beg. For real."

"I never beg."

"But for me you will."

I grin at his fierceness as he pours more lube onto his hand, skimming his fingers down my taint. My breath catches as he grabs my leg and places it over his shoulder, exposing me to him.

His eyes meet mine as he skims one finger down my crack, swirling around my hole.

My virgin hole.

I've never been fucked there before.

"I will be fucking you tonight. I'll sit on your big dick, but I'll be the one in charge, Mr. Costello. Not you. Not this time."

He pushes against my hole gently, and I feel it open for him. He continues to work his finger into me, and I find myself enjoying the look of concentration on his face more than the actual sensation of being penetrated.

"Do you like it?" he asks, and I lift my head slightly, widening my legs.

"I don't dislike it."

He smiles down at me and then frowns once more, trying to maintain the act of being stern. His finger slips all the way in, knuckle deep and my rim flexes against him.

"Hm. Interesting," I say, and he laughs lowly.

"Well, yeah, let me find your prostate and then we'll see what you think."

Suddenly, I feel him push against a part of me and my nostrils flare. *So this is what it feels like*, I think as I bite down on my lip. Hard.

"Yes, that's it," Tatum says and then pushes on it again.

My head snaps off the pillow, my arms pulling on my restraints. Suddenly, I'm not feeling in control, suddenly it's slipping through my fingers.

I gasp as he continues to toy with me.

"Yes. Yes. Do you like it?"

I swallow roughly, my mind spinning. Do I like it? I think so, but do I like feeling this out of control? No. But then again, it's Tatum. He has a way of making everything flip sideways.

"Maybe you'll like this then," he adds before leaning down and sucking my cock into his mouth. I bite back a groan, my hips arching up into his mouth, letting my willpower slowly be pushed aside.

I can give him this, I acquiesce. I can let him feel powerful for a moment.

My fingers flex into fists as his mouth slicks up and down my cock, his finger pressing against my prostate with agonizing precision. I find myself grunting with each downward suck and each soft press of him against me until I'm whispering his name.

Tatum pops off my cock suddenly, his eyes meeting mine.

“Yes? Are you ready to beg?” he asks, his lips swollen, his chin wet with spit. I can see his cock hard and pressed out from his body. He’s enjoying this just as much as me. This may be my punishment, but both of us are savoring it.

Tatum’s finger gently leaves me and he grabs on to the small dildo with a flared base. He wets it with his mouth first, giving me a show, and then slicks it with lube before pushing it slowly inside of me. I let out a slow exhale at the intrusion before he turns it on.

“Fuck,” I bite out, lifting my back off the bed, the vibration making me start to sweat.

“You like that?” he asks, and I grunt.

I don’t know what I like anymore. I don’t know anything. Just that he’s here.

He’s here and he’s touching me. Finally.

Tatum suddenly lunges for me, his mouth meeting mine in a frantic filthy kiss.

“Oh god, you’re so hot. So hot like this. I’m supposed to be mad, but all I am is horny.”

I grunt my approval. “Good. Now sit on my dick. Put us both out of our misery.”

He moans, kissing me fiercely, reaching for the lube, his lips never leaving mine. I know he’s working himself open as he straddles my hips, his cock brushing against mine, leaking onto my stomach.

“But you have to beg first. Please beg.”

I fist my hands and let him have this, just this once.

“Please, my little light. *Please.*”

And then he’s sitting back, his lips leaving mine for just a moment as he reaches back and places me at his entrance.

“Oh, fuck yes. I win. Yes, yes. Ready?” he asks, and I’m nearly mindless with lust.

I manage a small nod as he sinks down on me, taking the entirety of me in one downward thrust.

I groan as his lips slam into mine once more, our tongues warring as he starts to ride me, short pumps up and down my cock, making my entire body tremble. The sensation of something vibrating against my prostate and the tight vise-like grip his ass has on my cock is making my balls draw up.

When I can't take his small, frantic movements, needing more, I bend my knees and pound into him, making him cry out. He comes off my mouth with a groan, arching back, his cock slapping his stomach as I fuck into him. He holds on to me, clawing at my chest as I take what I want. What I need. I may be tied up, but I'm in control now.

I'm taking it. I'm taking *him*.

Tatum is murmuring incoherently under his breath, my name intermingled on his tongue like a prayer. His hair is wild, his cheeks red, his cock dribbling profusely.

"More. More. *More!*" he nearly screams and then starts to shake. I watch as he reaches down and grabs on to his dick, stroking it furiously before he explodes, his cock erupting across my chest. His hole tightens around me and my vision whites out as my release pulses into him, painting his insides with the very essence of me.

I bite my lip so hard it bleeds, and Tatum continues to fuck onto me until I'm oversensitive and hissing. It's then that he finally comes to a stop, his entire body shaking, the only sound in the room the vibrating dildo in my ass and our heavy breathing.

"Oh my god," he gasps as he reaches back with a trembling hand and turns off the dildo, pulling it out of my hole and tossing it aside.

"Uncuff me," I grunt, wanting to hold him and then wanting to fuck him again.

Worship him.

He fumbles for the key and leans forward. I nip at the skin of his chest until my hands are finally free to touch him. I grab his back and roll him beneath me, my legs straddling his now.

"Are you still mad?" I ask, my nose running up his cheek. He smells like me. Like us.

"No. Honestly, I can't even think right now..."

I lean down and kiss him softly before falling to his side and pulling him into my chest.

"Good. Next time we discuss this like men."

"Hm. Maybe. I'm only twenty-one, Anthony. Barely a man."

I huff out a laugh at that. He is young, but still. He's mine. Age is only a number.

"I know you're still upset, but I did what I thought was best. It wasn't easy, but it had to be done. If there was any other way, I would have made it

happen.”

“Yeah, okay,” he says softly and nuzzles back into me.

“And Tatum. When you wake up, and when you’re rested, this hole... it’s mine.”

---

I wake him up with a finger in his hole, stretching him open for me, feeling the leftover cum and lube from earlier. Tatum presses against my body, his back still to my chest, his legs parted slightly to give me better access.

I’m going to fuck him awake. And then fuck him again later on today.

Going to fuck him every chance I get.

“Anthony,” he groans, his voice still raspy with sleep.

I click the camera button as I press two fingers inside of him, stretching him open. He’s still loose from earlier, and yet I want to tease him like he teased me last night. I want him whining and begging for it. For me.

“Good morning, my little light,” I say softly, pressing my nose into the crook of his neck and inhaling, the camera beside me, waiting to be used. I’m going to document this. The way he pants and moans for me, the curves of his body.

“Are you taking pictures of me?” he asks, his voice rough from sleep.

“Hm, I am.”

“Good. Good,” he says and then gasps when I find his prostate and press against it. He stretches his legs open further and starts to arch his hips back, wanting more, wanting it deeper.

“Not yet,” I whisper, biting down on his skin and sucking.

He groans, his voice low and broken. “Please. Please.”

“So greedy,” I reply as I press three fingers into him, twisting my wrist and spreading them apart, making him arch back into me.

“More. More,” he pleads as he gasps my name. The way he looks, the pull of his lips, the arch of his hips. I grab the camera again and snap some more photos, excited for the first time in two decades to develop these, to see him appear before my eyes like magic.

I taunt him for several more minutes until he’s reaching for his cock and stroking it furiously.

“Not yet,” I tell him, pulling my fingers from him and wetting my cock with lube. I flip him onto his stomach and settle between his legs, pushing them further apart until they’re stretched impossibly wide, and then I pull his cheeks apart. I stare at his quivering hole, open, puffy, and red.

I snap a few pictures, one of my hand on his ass, the other of his spread hole, wet and glistening.

I squirt more lube down his crack and work it into him with the tip of my cock, making him groan into the pillow, his fingers grasping the sheets near his head. I watch the flush creep up his back and down his neck in the morning light, and I think that he’s absolutely perfect before sliding into him slowly.

His head comes off the pillow and he arches his back as I bottom out, filling him completely.

“Oh fuck,” he moans as I grind into him, opening him up with my dick. My hands are on either side of his head as I drag out of him and then push back inside. A slow, good-morning fuck. I should take a picture of this, a snapshot to remember it by, but right now, I just want to experience it.

Tatum is writhing beneath me, humping into the mattress, trying to find relief that way. But he won’t get it. Not yet.

I keep my pace slow, agonizing, until he’s nearly sobbing, his eyes leaking profusely.

“It’s too much,” he says. “I need more. Please!”

I lean down and bracket him completely, my body pressed against his. He fits perfectly against me.

“Who do you belong to?” I ask, and he murmurs my name. *Anthony. You.* A prayer, a plea.

“Good boy,” I say and then lift off him, shift his hips up, and fuck into him.

It’s a slap of skin on skin, our balls hitting each other’s as I impale him over and over. Tatum is clutching a pillow for dear life, his mouth open in a silent scream. My fingers dig into his hips, leaving marks, my fingerprints. He will look at himself later and see them, remember this, remember me.

I lift him a little higher, changing the angle, his knees nearly off the bed.

“Yes! Fuck yes!” he cries out as I use his hole, stuffing it full only to pull back out and slam in again. Tatum reaches down and cups his cock, his arm working quickly, his body shaking beneath me.

I feel the moment he comes, his body tensing, his hole clenching my cock almost painfully. I grunt as my movements stutter and then my entire body tightens and I feel my cock pump him full. I continue to rock into him, the squelch of my release filling him, making my softening cock hard once more.

I want to keep him full of my cum all day. I want him walking around with it sliding out of him, smelling of me.

I set him down, pulling out of him gently.

He falls to the sheets and groans, his body trembling in the aftershocks of his orgasm.

I stare down at him, his flushed skin, his damp hair.

My hands reach for his red ass cheeks and I spread them apart, looking at my release trickling out of him.

My finger trails up his taint and I push it back inside.

“Anthony, my god,” he moans as I continue to push my cum back into him. “It can’t stay in there forever.”

“Perhaps I should buy you a plug and make sure it does.”

He lets out another groan and then turns around, staring up at me, his chest smeared with his release.

“Let me get this on film,” I say, grabbing my camera and pushing his legs up, exposing his dripping hole to the lens. I snap in rapid succession and then let the camera fall to the side.

As I do, his hands drag up my thighs and cup my dick gently.

“I can’t believe you’re fucking me now. I’ve had dreams of this. So many dreams.”

He’s still half asleep, half dazed. I lean down and brush a hand across his cheek.

“It’s not a dream anymore, Tatum. This is your life now.”

He gives me a wobbly smile and then throws an arm across his eyes.

“Fine, I accept. Now draw me a bath, Mr. Mob Boss Man. I want you to wash me and then fuck me in the tub. Maybe take some more pictures of me, of us together.”

My dick is fully hard now, imagining it.

“As you wish,” I say softly and then push up, leaving him in my bed to turn on the water and warm the tub.

And I do wash him clean before fucking him, our bodies moving so frantically that the water splashes over the rim and onto the floor.

Neither of us gets out for a long while after, his head on my shoulder, his legs wrapped around me. And I'm loath to let him go.

I'm never letting him go.

---

We eventually make our way downstairs to the kitchen, Tatum leaning against me, his legs slightly bowed and wobbly from the earlier fucking I gave him.

It makes me incredibly proud, more proud than most things I've accomplished in my life. I've built empires, taken down entire crime families, and yet seeing Tatum satisfied like this takes it to another level.

The way my chest puffs out and my fingers tighten around him.

I want to mark him, make sure everyone knows he's mine.

No one will touch him now.

Not a fucking soul or I will rip them apart, bit by bit.

"Oh, good morning," Matty says, sipping a cup of tea. Agatha is bustling around the kitchen making breakfast, her grin widening when she sees who I'm with. Of course, he's even endeared himself to her. He seems to have done the same with everyone in my employ.

I nod at Matty, taking in his colorful Disneyland shirt with his name scrawled prettily on the bottom. I turn my gaze to a grumpy Sebastian, who is wearing a matching one and my lips twitch. He looks ridiculous. Who would've thought that the infamous Sebastian LeClerc would voluntarily wear Disney merchandise?

"I like your shirt," I say to him, and he glowers at me.

"Not a fucking word."

"Oh, but you look adorable," Matty coos, leaning into his husband and nuzzling into his neck. "Right, Tatum?"

Tatum grins widely. "He does. Like a happy little cherub."

Sebastian scoffs, looking ready to murder someone. I can understand the predicament he's in. If Tatum asked me to wear that godforsaken shirt, I'd do it, all while plotting the demise of everyone around me.

"So, you're off to Disneyland today, I take it?" I ask, and Matty bounces in his seat.

“We are. I am so excited!” My eyes swivel down to his bright shoes and pants, a colorful rainbow in the sea of gloom that is his husband.

“How thrilling,” I say, and Tatum giggles.

“I’m sorry to laugh,” he says. “But I can’t imagine your husband at Disneyland.”

“I know. He’s so grumpy about it. Threatened to murder the gate attendants and Mr. Disney himself, but I told him absolutely not. No way is he doing that. Besides, Walt died a long time ago. He’s not a time traveler.”

Sebastian grumbles under his breath and takes a long sip of his tea. “The things I do for you.”

Matty grins up at him and presses a kiss to his cheek. “The things you do to me.”

Sebastian growls lowly as I pull Tatum onto my lap at the table just as Agatha sets two plates before us. Eggs, bacon, and a waffle.

Tatum groans when he sees it and digs in, gulping it down as if he hasn’t been fed in a month.

“Sorry, Anthony wore me out last night,” he explains around a mouthful of food.

Matty blushes. “I know how it is.”

I sip at my coffee and listen as Matty and Tatum chatter on about Disneyland and the rides they’re going on. Sebastian has reserved a few nights at the Disneyland hotel, to enjoy not only the parks but the cities around it.

“I’ve always wanted to explore California. And it’s so big,” Matty says, and I eye Sebastian, who meets my stare with an arched eyebrow.

“It is. It’s bigger than most people think,” Tatum agrees as he shifts on my legs. His ass must be sore, and yet he doesn’t move from my lap. Perhaps I didn’t fuck him hard enough. Perhaps next time I should let loose completely.

“You should definitely do a trip up north as well,” Tatum adds. “There’s so much to see. Napa, Sanoma, San Francisco...”

“Oh, we will. We may extend our stay and make a month out of it.”

“If Sebastian survives Disneyland, that is,” I say, and Sebastian’s mouth moves into a frown.

“If I could die, I would attempt it.”

Matty rolls his eyes and nudges his husband. “Honestly, you are ridiculous.”

Tatum snorts and then scrapes at his plate, licking his fork before setting it down and leaning back against me, patting at his stomach.

“Wow, that was really good,” he says. “I could nap after that, Agatha.”

She waves him off with a tut, continuing to work. That woman never stops. I should give her a raise, or a vacation. Not that she’d take it. She’s a machine.

“You slept plenty last night,” I murmur into Tatum’s ear and slide my hand up his shirt. His skin is warm and soft, his heart thrumming perfectly beneath my palm.

“I have it documented.”

“You took pictures while I slept?”

“Mhm.”

My hands skim over his puckered nipples, plucking at them lightly. I can’t stop touching him.

“What do you have planned today?” Matty asks us, and before Tatum can open his mouth to answer, I chime in.

“I plan on fucking him a few more times.”

Tatum’s mouth falls open and his skin blossoms into a pretty pink.

“Oh my god, Anthony.”

Sebastian’s lips twitch. “Sounds like a much better time than Disneyland.”

“Agreed,” I say, and Tatum rolls his eyes, wiggling around on my lap and making my dick hard. Seems the switch has ceased to exist. Seems Tatum set it on fire and it crumbled to ashes before being blown to the four corners of the earth.

Fuck. Me.

Matty and Sebastian finish breakfast before setting off for their little California adventure, and Tatum wanders off with Teddy while I get ready for the day. I have a shit-ton of meetings, and yet all I want to do is bend Tatum over my desk and fuck him again, to sink my cock into that wet, tight heat and lose myself for a few moments.

*Although, perhaps I should give him a small break,* I think as I settle down into my leather chair in my office and pull up my agenda for the day.

Hm. Just a small break to take care of business, to follow up on what the Fallen Aces have been up to and where they’ve been. Last I heard, they were quiet, far too quiet, if you ask me. I don’t like this, not at all.

It means they have something up their sleeves. Then again, their new leader, Douglas, is relatively unknown to me. I don't understand how he operates. All I do know is that he's sloppy, that despite him trying to outmaneuver me, he's leaving a trail of crumbs that only implicate him in his crimes.

These are things I've been keeping track of.

These are the things that will eventually bring them down. That or death.

I pull out my phone and stab at my contact in the FBI. Yes, I'll take care of this first and then Tatum's mine again.

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## TATUM

I find myself unsure of what to do now that Angel is gone. I know my parents will come to visit in a few weeks for my graduation, but now I have no one to really talk to while Anthony is busy, and I find myself aimless.

I manage to do some homework and then wander around the gardens, seeing the flowers in bloom that Angel worked so hard on. Who will care for them when they're wilting? When they need weeding?

Teddy's watching me from the porch, but I don't see any of the gardeners in sight. This whole place could become neglected.

Bending down, I pull a weed from the soil, the thorny sides biting into my skin.

"Shit," I murmur just as someone appears next to me, cigarette smoke wafting up to meet me.

Luca.

"It's different without him here, huh?" he asks, leaning against a tree, sucking on his cigarette.

"Yeah," I say, brushing my hand on my pants and standing up straight. "It's kind of awful."

I sniffle and swipe at my eyes.

Luca holds out his cigarette, and I take a step toward him, grabbing the infernal thing and taking a hit.

He grins at me when I start to cough, unused to smoke in my lungs.

He takes it from me and inhales once more. "You'll get used to it."

"It's a terrible habit."

"Only if you die from it," he says, and I let out a small laugh as I lean against the tree next to him. "You know what you could use? A night out."

"Anthony won't let me leave."

Luca snuffs his cigarette out on the tree and then pushes away from it to face me. "Why does he need to know?"

My eyes widen, and I feel my lips pull up. "Are you serious?"

"I am. Meet me here after dinner. Anthony has another meeting, and I'll send Teddy on an errand so I can sneak you out for a bit. It'll be fun."

"You do realize that he will kill you for this?"

"I think we'll be just fine."

He winks at me and then places a finger to his lips as he walks away from me. "Just don't tell anyone. Our little secret."

I watch him walk away and sink down to the base of the tree, absently pulling at blades of grass.

I shouldn't. I absolutely should not leave the premises, but if he says it's safe...

Why the fuck not?

---

I try not to be suspicious, spending the rest of the day working on finishing up my homework for the week and then messaging Angel. He doesn't answer like he normally would, so I text Casey.

Within minutes he responds, letting me know that Angel is alive and well, just busy unpacking his things and getting settled in. He even sends me a picture of Angel grinning at the camera, an airy and bright room behind him.

Seeing his smile makes me feel a little more at ease. But I'll feel loads better once I can actually talk to him face to face and get a read on him. To see how he's really feeling about the move and the marriage.

But for now, I'm left to wait. Wait to chat with Angel and wait for my little sneaky rendezvous with Luca later.

So, I try to bide my time, helping Agatha in the kitchen and then getting ready for my night out while Anthony is preoccupied with his meetings.

I should tell him, but he'll just say no, absolutely not. And Luca is his best friend, his right-hand man. There's no way he's going to let anything bad happen to me.

I'm safe. I'll be fine. And what Anthony doesn't know won't kill him.

So when it's time, I meet Luca by the tree outside, and he grins at me, nodding toward a shed on the far end of the property.

"We can sneak out this way. It leads out to an exit."

My eyes widen, and I link my arm with his. "Seriously?"

"Yeah, but no telling anyone. Not many people know."

"I won't say a word."

He unlocks the door and steps through, pulling me into his side in the darkness and working his way forward. I stumble slightly, but his arm around me keeps me steady and pretty soon we're walking under dimly lit lights through a tunnel that I'm pretty sure I've been through before.

But then again, I don't know. I'm all turned around.

"How do you keep track of where you're going?" I ask.

"Practice, but I'll give you a little tip." He points up and I see a red marker. "Those are clues. They let you know which way to go. If you know the combination, you can find your way around pretty well."

"And who knows the combination?"

"A select few."

"Who's going with us?"

"Just Viktor. The fewer who know where we are the better. For safety reasons."

"We're gonna get in trouble."

Luca grins as he shoves open a door and gestures for me to follow him out.

"No, we won't. He won't ever know, and you need a break. He can't keep you locked up for ages. You're not an animal."

He places his hand on the small of my back and leads me forward to a waiting black SUV. I can see Viktor inside, his face set in a scowl.

"Are you fucking serious?" Viktor asks as soon as I slide inside. "You didn't tell me he was coming."

Insecurity hits me. He obviously doesn't want me here with them. I'm offending him by my mere presence. Luca notices my frown.

“It’s not you, don’t take it personal. He just doesn’t want to get into trouble. He’s a brown noser, right up Anthony’s ass all the time.”

“No. I’m just a good fucking friend. I’m not taking Anthony’s boy around town when it’s fucking dangerous.”

“It’s not dangerous where we’re going...”

“If you do this, he’s gonna have your balls,” Viktor barks, and Luca just grins wickedly.

“You’re always so uptight, and listen, you owe me. So fucking drive, you prick.”

When we slide inside, he rolls his window down a bit and lights up a cigarette, blowing the smoke out as Viktor grumbles but pulls away from the hidden exit. I can’t even make the door out when I look, the entrance is completely camouflaged in the trees.

As we drive away into the night, my gut tightens. I should have told Anthony. If he comes looking for me and can’t find me, he’s going to be worried. But at least I’m with Luca.

I’ll be fine. One-hundred-percent fine.

“So, why does Viktor owe you?” I ask softly, and Luca grins down at me.

“I may have a little dirt on him. He has filthy little secrets.”

Viktor’s cheeks darken and his eyes flash to Luca in the rearview mirror.

“Fuck off, Luca.”

“What kind of secrets?” I ask, far too intrigued and way too nosy. You can’t say things like filthy little secrets and not divulge. It’s like showing me an entrance to a secret passageway and telling me not to go inside.

Luca winks at me. “I’ll tell you when he’s not listening.”

Viktor’s hands flex on the steering wheel. “You won’t say a fucking word.”

Luca inhales his cigarette and then shrugs, nonchalant. Apparently, these two don’t get along, the tension in the cab of the car creeping up to near visible proportions.

I don’t know much about Luca other than he’s been Anthony’s right-hand man for years and the two of them are loyal to one another. Loyal to a fault, it seems. And I know that Luca adores Diablo and Angel, has been there for their entire lives. And he apparently had a thing with Anthony’s late wife. But whatever’s happening between Viktor and Luca is something

else entirely. I don't even know if Anthony knows how deep this feud may run.

"It's none of your business, Tatum," Viktor grinds out, and Luca stabs his cigarette out after one last puff.

"It may be. He is Anthony's, after all."

Suddenly, the car lurches to the right and Viktor slams the car into park. The hazards are flipped on and he jumps out. Luca's car door opens and Viktor wrenches Luca out by the lapels of his coat.

Luca just chuckles as Viktor pushes him up against the side of the car, closing the door with his hand. It slams shut and I jump slightly, turning in my seat to watch as Viktor gets in Luca's face, spitting out muffled words that I can't hear.

And then Luca does something I'm not expecting. He grins, his hands moving into Viktor's hair, making Viktor sputter and blush. He's obviously confused, caught off guard by the touch, and when Luca has him right where he wants him, the cards are flipped.

Viktor is slammed into the side of the car, Luca pressing up against his chest, his mouth near his ear, whispering something.

God damn, the tension is high.

My dick appreciates the show, and I reach down to adjust myself. This is like a well-done porn flick. But in real life.

They tussle for a few minutes and then Viktor is pressed face first against the glass, Luca pushed up against his back, his lips still moving, making Viktor's mouth open in a pant. He's not replying, just being held docile.

And I swear, I see Luca's hips thrust forward a few times.

Christ on a cracker, what is going on?

And then suddenly, as if it never happened, it's done. Luca pushes away from him and slides inside the car, leaving Viktor to adjust himself and slip back behind the wheel.

I stare at Luca, his cheeks a little flushed, and when I move my gaze to Viktor, he refuses to make eye contact with anything but the road.

"We'll get back to it now. Sorry about that little tantrum," Luca says calmly.

I swallow and nod, wiping my hands down my pants. The tension is now so thick, you could cut it with a knife.

But neither of them says anything, so I stay silent too.

What the fuck is going on with them? And why do I want to know so bad?

---

Twenty minutes later, we arrive at a dingy warehouse district. Somewhere I've never been. It looks shady as fuck, but Luca looks unbothered. Although, he's the very description of calm and collected, even after that little showdown with Viktor earlier. It's like it never happened.

Viktor, on the other hand, looks like he's ready to combust, a fire in his eyes that hasn't dimmed since he slid back behind the wheel.

"This looks a little sus," I say, and Luca chuckles.

"Outward appearances aren't everything," he replies. Don't know what that means. Not a fucking clue.

When we exit the SUV in a dark alley, Luca tucks me into his side and pulls out a key card, pushing me through a side door. My heart thunders in my chest but then I hear it, the sound of music and voices.

Luca isn't bringing me here to kill me.

Fuck, why didn't I think about that when I first got into the car? I obviously need to do better.

I glance back at Viktor and see that he's whispering angrily into Luca's ear, but is dismissed.

"Don't fucking worry. He's fine," Luca replies.

Viktor crosses his arms on his chest and sets his jaw as he follows us into the large room. The heavy bass thumps through me, house music blaring through the speakers. Luca's right. This place is far nicer than the outside. In fact, it looks as if this is a place for people with a certain kind of wealth. The kind I could only dream of.

The kind that Anthony apparently has.

My eye catches on the long bar, expensive bottles lining the shelves behind it. Hanging from the ceiling are dancers in cages, all of them completely naked, their bodies on display. I see people in outfits far fancier than mine mingling, dancing, drinking, and for a moment I curse Luca for not telling me where we were going. I'd have dressed a little nicer.

"Who owns this place?" I ask, and Luca chuckles.

"Anthony and I. It's very lucrative."

I eye him, and he taps his nose. I don't know what that means. Drugs? Sex? Gambling? I have no idea.

"And see those people wearing those silver arm bands?"

I peer over and see one every few yards, looking dapper in their suits and ties.

"Yeah, who are they?"

"Guards. It's safe here. Now go have fun. Drink. Dance. We'll keep an eye on you."

I hesitate a moment, looking out at the people writhing in the middle of the dance floor. They even dance like rich people. I will definitely not fit in.

"A drink first," I tell Luca, and he grins.

"Viktor. Take him to get a drink. I have business to attend to."

Viktor's hand lands on my lower back and he guides me forward. When we get to the bar top, we move between a few people and I half-expect I'll have to spend hours waving someone down, but Viktor is immediately recognized. A young woman saunters up to us, winking at us both.

"Oh, Vik, you have a cutie with you tonight."

Viktor huffs and shakes his head. "He's not mine. He's the boss's."

The woman's perfectly plucked eyebrows rise. "You don't say?" Her manicured hand reaches across the bar top and as she does this, I realize I can peer down the front of her sheer dress. Not that I look. "I'm Monica. So nice to meet you."

"Tatum," I say, slipping my hand into hers. She shakes it and then winks at me.

"Everything's on the house, of course. What would you like? And only the best for you."

I feel my cheeks flush and then I blurt, "Um, surprise me."

Monica grins and nods. "Oh, I do like him. You got it. And I assume, nothing for you?" she asks Viktor. He just shakes his head.

She turns away and gets to work, leaving me to lean against the bar and wait. My eyes scan the people converging around us, watching as they interact. They seem like people who have too much time on their hands and way too much money.

They move like Anthony in many ways. Sure, confident. Powerful. Like they've never been told *no* a day in their lives.

As my gaze flits around, someone to my right meets my stare and nods at me.

I find myself blinking over at him, something unfurling in my stomach. I don't like how he's looking at me. Not at all.

"Who's that?" I ask, leaning into Viktor, hoping his proximity to me makes the other man look away.

"Who?"

"The young guy with the purple tie and the earring."

"Oh, that's no one you need to be concerned with."

"What's his name?"

"Henry. But stay away from him. He's an asshole and not to be trusted."

I nod and tuck myself into Viktor's side, letting him shield me until Monica brings me my drink. It's bright green with a salt rim.

"What is it?" I ask, staring into the glittering drink.

"A green goddess, just like you."

She winks at me, and I take a sip, the no-doubt expensive liquor sliding down my throat with ease. It settles into my stomach and immediately makes me lightheaded. It's stronger than it tastes, it seems.

"You alright?" Viktor asks, and I nod, taking another sip.

"Yep. It's good."

"Yeah, but knowing Monica, it's strong, so be careful."

I smack my lips together and nod. "Mister, I am *always* careful."

---

I am one with the beat. I can feel the thumping move through my torso and into my legs. I can't stop moving.

I should have become a ballerina. I have grace and poise.

"You drank too much," Viktor shouts into my ear as I spin in his arms and wrap my arms around his neck.

"I only had three drinks."

"That was two too many."

I snort and then lift my arms off him and sway them back and forth in the air. This has been nice, really fucking fun. It would be better if Anthony was here to grind up against, but he's not. So I've been relegated to pulling Viktor onto the dancefloor. I haven't seen Luca since he led me inside. I have no idea where he is or what he's doing. And to be honest, I don't fucking care. Viktor is doing a superb job of hovering.

“You’re a very good dancer,” I tell Viktor and then grab his hands and spin around, feeling like I’m flying. Perhaps there was something else in that green goddess drink. Something more than alcohol.

I have never felt this fearless before.

“Have you taken dancing lessons?” I ask as I shake my ass violently, but Viktor has stopped moving, his jaw tight as he stares over my shoulder, a flush moving up his cheeks.

“Oh fuck,” he murmurs, and then I feel it.

Anthony. Right behind me.

His hands move around my waist, pulling me back against his chest.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” he asks, his voice a murderous rage.

It only makes my dick perk up and my heart stutter.

“Dancing like a pro,” I reply, leaning my head back against his shoulder and grinding my ass back against his groin.

His fingers tighten on my waist and his voice cuts across to Viktor. “Where the fuck is Luca?”

“In the back,” Viktor says, and Anthony’s fingers flex against me.

“I’ll deal with you both later. I’m taking him home. Now.”

“But I don’t want to go,” I whine, but Anthony just spins me around and tilts my chin up. His eyes meet mine, and I see his gaze darken. He’s unhappy, angry. But even so, he leans down and kisses me, sweeping his tongue into my mouth, tasting me.

I moan into it, leaning my full weight into his body and clutching onto him.

But before I can get carried away, he’s pulling away and huffing under his breath.

“A green goddess? Really, Viktor. You should know better.”

Viktor remains silent as Anthony pulls me against him and nearly carries me outside. Teddy is in the driver’s seat of a black SUV, not even looking my way as Anthony shuffles me into the backseat and follows me in.

The door slams and Teddy peels out of the parking lot, a sense of urgency about his movements that I haven’t seen before.

Anthony reaches around me and buckles me in, and I lean into him, sniffing his masculine scent. I want to rub all over him, I want to be naked. Suddenly, the clothes I’m wearing are stifling.

“Not on your fucking life,” he murmurs when I start to try and undress.  
“You keep your clothes on. You’re not getting shit from me tonight.”

“Luca said it was safe,” I reply, nuzzling into him, the seatbelt cutting into my neck slightly as I lean against him.

“Not a fucking word about goddamn Luca. The fool.”

I sigh and then slip my fingers through the buttons of his shirt, stroking his chest, his warm skin. He sighs but doesn’t remove my hand from him. He may be angry, but he’s not over me.

Which is good news. I’m not ready for any of this to be over.

“Anthony, do you really own that club with Luca?” I ask.

He nods. “Yes.”

“Is it for rich people? If I wasn’t with you, I wouldn’t be allowed in, huh? That’s discrimination, you know?”

He huffs as I peer up at him.

“You shouldn’t have been there, not with Viktor and most certainly not with Luca. When you sober up, you’re getting a spanking.”

I groan and wiggle a little closer, the seatbelt now cutting into my arm. I want to crawl into his lap and grind.

“I’m totally fine with that. I’ve been so very bad. Very, very bad. I’ll probably need several spankings.”

Anthony runs his hand through my hair and our eyes meet just as the first gunshot rings out.

# 18

TATUM

Anthony roughly pushes me down onto his lap, hovering over me as the impact of the second bullet hits the window. Of course the car is armored and the bullet just leaves a spiderweb on the glass, but still, the shock of it has my heart rate increasing. All the blood pools in my ears and I feel dizzy from it.

“Shit, who the fuck is that?” Anthony bites out, but of course Teddy doesn’t answer. “Can you see?”

Another bullet hits the glass and then another.

*Thud. Thud.*

I’m shaking in Anthony’s lap when I see him pull his gun out, holding it in his free hand.

“Get me closer,” he barks, and Teddy swerves just as another round of bullets flies into the side of the car. Oh my god. How much more can this car take? I don’t know. I don’t fucking know.

*This is all my fault,* I think, but when I hear Anthony grunt that it’s not and to calm down, I realize that I’m screaming it.

I really shouldn’t have had those drinks.

My stomach roils and I clutch Anthony’s thighs as he rolls his window down slightly and unloads an entire clip. I can hear the rev of motorcycles outside just as Teddy does the same, somehow managing to continue to

steer the vehicle and stay on the road while I just shut my eyes and lie there, useless.

“I fucking knew it,” Anthony grunts. “It’s them.”

I don’t look, but I know it’s the Fallen Aces.

*This is all my fault. All my fault.*

Tears slip from my eyes, and I find myself clutching to Anthony tighter, holding him close. I should have never left the property, should have never listened to Luca. Fuck. I’m never leaving the house again.

Anthony’s phone rings and he stabs at it, putting it on speaker as tires squeal and another barrage of shots rings out. This time from the other side. How many bullets do these people have? Oh god, they’re going to kill us. There are only three of us and far more of them from the sounds of it.

“Boss?” I hear a voice from the phone. It’s Viktor and he sounds distressed. “There’s a fire. At the club. Fuck!”

“How?” Anthony asks.

“I don’t know. It was in the back. I’m...shit. *Luca!*”

The line goes dead and more shots ring out. I can’t cope. I can’t handle it. My hands move up to my ears and I press down on them roughly. My entire body sways with the movement of the car, the smell of smoke. More gunshots, the shattering of metal and glass.

A grunt and a swerve of the car before automatic gunshots ring out. Anthony, leaning out the car window, unloading into the car next to him. I’m unbuckled and lying on the ground now, the seatbelt forgotten, curled up in a ball, trying to make myself so small.

My fault.

My fault.

Everyone is going to die because of me.

Because I was stupid enough to go to that little bar on the outskirts of town and get my ass kicked for flirting.

Stupid. So stupid.

The nightmare doesn’t end until the car finally stops and I’m pulled out and rushed inside.

“Get the doc!” Anthony shouts and people come bustling out, Agatha first, gasping when she sees Teddy. Her hair is a mess and she’s wearing a nightgown, but still, she rallies. She hustles to the kitchen and grabs a hand towel.

It's then that I see it. A wound on Teddy's shoulder, blood gushing from it and down his shirt.

So much. There's so much.

I nearly pass out, not because of the blood but because it's him. My friend is hurt because of me.

"How did that happen?" I gasp, my lungs hyperventilating. "How did it —there was armor!"

I let out a sob as Anthony hands me over to someone I don't recognize. He needs to get me out of the way. I'm just a distraction. Unfamiliar hands go around me as Anthony orders them to take me to his room. I don't want to go. I want to stay, but I'm nearly carried up the porch stairs, my body wracked with sobs, my vision whiting out.

If he dies, I will never forgive myself. I'll never be the same.

I blink my eyes open and see Anthony watching me go, his hands streaked with blood.

And all I see there is hate.

He despises me.

---

I lay on the bed, my eyes open, seeing nothing. I can hear the movement downstairs as tears slip down my cheeks to the sheets below me. If only Angel were here to reassure me in the way only he can, but he's not. He's gone. So far away.

I sniffle loudly and stare at the door. I want someone to tell me that Teddy's okay. I want to go and see him, to give him a hug and whisper my apology in his ear.

But no one comes.

And I'm left here waiting.

---

Anthony appears sometime in the night, his hands red from blood, his shirt soaked in it. He looks worn, tired.

"He's in surgery now" he says, and I sit up quickly, nearly passing out from relief.

“Can I see him?”

He shakes his head. “When he’s out of surgery we can. Let’s shower first.”

I shake my head, my eyes leaking anew. I thought I was done crying, but apparently I’m not.

“You hate me.”

Anthony freezes and then runs a hand down his face. “Hate is the opposite of what I feel for you.”

“I don’t know what that means.”

“It means I want you in the shower.”

I nod and push myself up on wobbly legs, my mouth dry, my cheeks wet. I swipe at them and follow Anthony into the bathroom. He turns the shower on and starts to strip. And for the first time, my cock only hardens halfway. It could be the drinks, but I think it’s the guilt. The sorrow etched into my bones.

I don’t know how Anthony will ever forgive me.

“Come on,” he says as he helps me undress, his hands gentle as he peels me from my clothes and helps me step under the water. I don’t close my eyes, just look at him as the water drips down my face. My hands run up his forearms and onto his shoulders, touching him.

He’s alive. He’s here with me.

He reaches over and grabs the shampoo, working it into my hair, his eyes intent on mine.

“It’s not your fault. Not entirely,” he finally says, and I let out a choked sob.

“It is.”

“It’s Luca’s...”

“Is he okay? Are they okay?”

“Yes, Luca has some minor burns and a black eye but he’ll live.”

I let out a sigh of relief. Oh my god. I’d never survive if they hadn’t made it out of there.

“Was the fire because of me?”

“No. None of this is your fault. It’s the Aces. I’ve been using my contacts against them, dismantling their organization over the past few weeks. They’re angry and are acting out. The club is just a casualty. But it can be rebuilt.”

“I’m so sorry,” I whisper.

“It would have happened regardless. I’m just glad you’re okay.”

The soap slides from my hair as I pull Anthony into me, tucking my face into his chest and clutching onto his skin. The blood from his arms is washing down the drain, and I close my eyes.

I don’t want to see it.

“Let’s wash and then we’ll wait for Doc to come get us when Teddy’s out of surgery.”

I shake my head. “I want to sleep down there with him. I want to see him.”

Anthony tilts his chin. “We can, but only when Doc says so. For now, let’s clean up and let me hold you.”

I do as he says, letting his hands scrub the night away from both of us, and then he bundles me up, settling me back on the bed.

I reach out for him and crawl onto his lap, burying my body against his.

“Fuck me, please, Anthony,” I say. “I just...I want to feel something good.”

Anthony hesitates a moment and then grabs the lube. I lie on my back and watch as he settles between my legs. He slowly works me open before pushing inside of me. My dick is half hard, settled against my thigh, but this isn’t about getting off. This is about feeling him inside of me.

“Do you hate me?” I ask, and Anthony shakes his head, his cock bottoming out in me.

“Never,” he rasps and then leans down and kisses me gently.

Our tongues tangle lazily as he pushes in and out of me slowly, almost as if he’s savoring it. I know I am. I love the stretch of it, the sting. I want him to keep me full until it’s time to go see Teddy. I want him to own me until then, to take my mind off the horrific evening we’ve had.

He seems to read my mind and leans down on top of me, our bodies joined as he just kisses me. He doesn’t fuck me anymore. Just keeps me stuffed full.

My hands tangle in his hair, my legs wrapped around his lower back as I just savor him.

He’s safe. He’s alive. He’s mine.

He eventually shifts off of me and enters me from the side, my back pressed to his chest as he cradles me tightly.

“Thank you,” I say, and he presses his face into my neck and inhales me.

“I would die for you,” he whispers, and my eyes grow wet again.

“Please don’t. I wouldn’t survive it.”

“I plan on living a long time, my little light. Don’t worry.”

I nuzzle back, feeling the tug of him inside of me and for the first time all night, I let myself drift off.

---

Doc wakes me, his voice tired and brash.

“He’s awake and in good spirits.”

I gasp and sit up, Anthony’s dick still inside of me.

“Thank you. Can we see him?” I ask, and Doc nods before leaving the room.

I scramble off Anthony, groaning when his dick slides from me. But now’s not the time. Anthony seems to think the same thing because he’s up and pulling on some pajama bottoms. I do the same, nearly running out of the room before realizing I have no idea where Teddy is.

“Here,” Anthony says, moving us both down the hallway. “He’s in here.”

I follow him and as soon as the door opens and I see my wounded bodyguard in a makeshift bed, I let out a cry of relief.

“Teddy,” I choke out as I stumble toward him, grabbing on to his big hand and linking my fingers with his. “You’re okay.”

He nods and wets his lips.

“I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry.”

He shakes his head and then his free hand reaches out and cups my cheek gently.

That just makes me cry again. I’m a blubbering mess. I lean against his good arm and have to stop myself from crawling into bed with him.

“Here,” Anthony says, and I see him pull up a chair for me to sit in. “That way you’re more comfortable.”

I nod and take a seat, Anthony putting a blanket over my shoulders. “Stay as long as you want. Kick him out when you need space, Teddy.”

Teddy just nods and then his lips lift in a small smile.

“I’m so glad you’re okay,” I whisper wetly.

He just squeezes my hand and then nods to the space beside him.

“Yeah? You sure?” I ask and he nods, so I clamber in beside him and rest my head on his good shoulder.

Anthony huffs beside me, but leaves me alone.

It’s fine. I just need to hear him breathe.

---

When Teddy finally falls asleep, I linger for a little while longer before sneaking off to check on Luca and Viktor.

I find them all in Anthony’s office, pulling Viktor into a long hug as soon as I can. He smells like smoke despite his shower, but he still pats my back and mutters that he’s fine. I move toward Luca next. He’s puffing on a cigarette on the couch, his palms bandaged, a singe on his cheek.

My legs carry me over to him, and I crawl onto his lap.

He chuckles, blowing smoke from the corner of his mouth. He has a bruise on his right eye, and I touch it lightly.

“Glad you’re okay,” he says, and I nod, clinging to him.

“I’m so glad you’re okay too. I guess it must have been pretty bad for Anthony to let you smoke in here.”

“It was something,” he says as he presses a kiss to my forehead.

“Alright, enough,” Anthony says and then calls me to him.

I just look up from where I’m nestled against Luca’s chest and sigh.  
“Just a moment.”

Luca laughs softly and then shifts me on his lap, his hand stroking up and down my back.

“I don’t share Tatum,” Anthony says, and Luca nods.

“I know, Boss. Don’t worry. I’m not interested in your boy. Now tell me what the plan is?”

Anthony eyes us both and then nods. “They’re desperate now. I’ve managed to get most of their businesses shut down with the help of the senator and his connections with the FBI. But we need to finish them.”

I peer over at him and his eyes are on me before they slide to Luca. “They tried to take him from me. Tried to take you and Viktor from me. And you’re sure that it was Henry you saw speaking to the Aces?”

“Yep, that little shit stick,” Luca replies, taking another drag of his cigarette.

My groggy mind pulls up a vision of a man with a purple tie and an earring. I remember Viktor telling me that he was no good. To stay away.

Was he responsible for this? He didn't look like he could be, but then again, Viktor did seem wary.

"And how did he know where we were and when?" Anthony asks.

"Dunno. I was in the back doing club business. I don't know where he's getting any of his information."

"Shit."

"Someone's saying something," Viktor says, his eyes on Luca, and I can feel the man tense beneath me.

"It's not me, Vik. No matter how fucking poorly you think of me."

Anthony is silent and then he leans back. "It's not Luca."

Luca inhales again before snubbing his cigarette out and lighting another one with some kind of electric lighter.

"At least someone has my back."

"It's someone else. Someone who knows the ins and outs of my business and saw you sneaking out."

They sit in silence, occasionally rattling off a name or two, but all are easily dismissed.

They have no idea who it could be.

"That's bad, right?" I ask. "Like not knowing who it is?"

"Yeah. I may have to postpone your parents' trip out here. I'm sorry, Tatum, but it's not safe until we get this whole thing situated."

"It's okay. As long as they're safe."

And it is. I don't want to be selfish and have something bad happen to my parents. I've learned my lesson. I should have been safe with Luca and Viktor and I wasn't. Not at all. If I lost my parents, I wouldn't survive it.

"We'll figure out something when this is all sorted. For now, keep the extra guards and set up more cameras around the place. I want to know who's leaking information. Get Bane on it as well."

Viktor nods and then disappears, obviously going to make sure everything falls into place.

"Alright, enough with Luca," Anthony finally says. "Come here, Tatum."

Luca huffs a small laugh. "You better go before I lose my fingers."

I roll off his lap and press a kiss to his cheek before sliding into Anthony's and snuggling against him. His arms go around me and he shifts

me even closer. His tense body seems to loosen slightly at my presence, and I preen internally that I'm the one who can do this for him. That even though I've caused so much trouble, I do something for him, give him something back.

Even if it's small. It's something.

My gaze turns to Luca, and I see him staring off into the distance, smoke trailing from his lips in wisps. He looks haunted.

"Have any casualties been reported?" Anthony finally asks, and Luca shakes his head.

"Not yet. Waiting to hear from them. I think everyone got out though."

Anthony lowers his voice and whispers to me. "Luca hates fire."

My eyebrows meet, and he shakes his head. He won't tell me why, maybe it's something I'll never know the reason behind, but it's something to keep in mind.

"Why don't you go get some rest. You can use one of the guest rooms," Anthony says.

Luca nods and pushes himself up. "Yeah. I'll just take a walk first."

He nods to me and then leaves without another word.

I peer up at Anthony. "Will he be okay?"

"He will. We all have ways of compartmentalizing things. He just needs a minute."

"Yeah. I think we all do," I say on a yawn.

"Let's get you to bed."

"I don't want to go. I want to stay awake. What if Teddy needs me?"

Anthony shifts me off his lap and then hefts me into his arms. "He'll be fine. You need sleep. Agatha will need help tomorrow and you're no good to anyone dead on your feet."

That motivates me—being useful. I nod and let him carry me to his room and tuck me under the covers. He slides in behind me and pulls me to his chest, pressing a kiss to my skin as I let my eyelids finally drift closed.

---

The next day, I don't stop moving despite my body aching. I think Agatha is overwhelmed by me lurking, but I need to be put to work before I go crazy.

So I do everything she asks. Even when she tells me to take a long walk in the garden, I do it. But then I come right back and make my way to Teddy's room. He's still recovering, in and out of consciousness. The meds have made him slightly loopy, and I wonder if today is the day he'll finally speak, whisper a word to me, but he never does. He just smiles at me when I show up. I spend some time reading him filthy smut scenes from a romance novel I found in Anthony's library.

Monster sex.

I think he likes it by the way he blushes.

After he falls back asleep, I run around, trailing after Luca and Viktor, bothering them both endlessly until finally Luca locks himself away and Viktor scurries off underground.

I harrumph and settle down in the garden once more.

I've exhausted myself. I have nothing left to do.

So I pull out my phone and I call Angel, checking up on him.

He doesn't answer, but a few minutes later he sends me several short videos, showing off his room and the gardens. I don't see his face, but I can hear his sweet, tinkling voice.

Fuck, I miss him.

Before I can send him one back, the door to one of the sheds opens and I see Bane appear. It's sunset, almost dusk, and he blinks wildly in the light.

"Should have brought my sunglasses," he grumbles and then his eyes land on me. His mouth turns up and he grins.

"Hello, little snack. What are you doing out here?"

"I was trying to call Angel."

"Oh, did he answer? I've been calling too. I sent him a gift and wanted to make sure he got it."

"What did you send him?"

He grins and then settles down next to me. "I made him a bracelet out of teeth."

I let out a snort and Bane nudges me, before pulling me into him and rubbing his nose across the top of my head.

"You always smell good. I could gobble you right up."

"Please don't. Only Anthony is allowed to do any gobbling."

He giggles gleefully and then pulls away. "Can I ask a question?"

"Sure thing."

“What do you think someone would like as a gift? Someone that’s a casual hookup...but a really good fuck.”

My eyebrows rise. “Are you seeing someone, Bane?”

His cheeks blush and he shrugs. “Maybe. I want to give them a gift but not sure what would be appropriate. Do you think another eyeball? Maybe a nose? I do have a great collection of kidneys.”

I let out a laugh so loud some birds nestled in the trees squawk at me.

“How about some flowers or like, a nice dinner?”

He rolls his lips between his teeth. “That’s boring. Maybe a vial of blood from one of their enemies.”

I sigh and then elbow him gently. “You know what? You do you. I’m sure they’ll love it. Can I ask who it is?”

Bane winks at me. “You can, but it’s a secret. No one can know.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s forbidden.”

My eyes widen at that, and then Bane stands, leaning down and smacking a kiss on my lips.

“Bye, my little snack. See you around.”

And then he disappears around the corner of a shed and is gone. I have no idea where he’s going, but honestly, I don’t know if I want to know.

I sit outside a little while longer, my eyes lingering on the house in the distance before moving to the flowers, the white lilies lit up by the pinks and purples of the sunset. *Teddy should be out here with me*, I think, frowning. Angel should be here too, watching the sun set while he tends to his garden.

I pull out my phone and hit the camera, wanting to take a video of myself in his favorite place in the world. So he can see it, if he’s perhaps a little homesick.

“Hey,” I say as my face appears on the screen. “I miss you, friend. I wanted to show you this beautiful sunset and how good your garden looks. I know it’s only been a few days, but I’ve been taking care of it when I can. And I think your dad is going to hire someone to make sure it’s beautiful for when you come to visit...”

I pivot the phone as I walk around, showing him the space where he used to spend hours, leaning down to show him how some of his bulbs have started to sprout.

I hear a rustling behind me, but I just shut the video off and send it to Angel, turning to greet whoever is coming to meet me. It must be Anthony. He's probably annoyed I've stayed busy all day and haven't had time to see him.

"I know, I know..." I say, turning around, my eyes flitting up the dark figure before me.

The phone falls from my hand, my heart leaping into my throat.

"You're not Anthony," I whisper and the man chuckles, pulling something long and sharp from his pocket.

"I sure as fuck am not."

And then he lunges. I feel a sting in my neck and everything goes black.

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# 19

## ANTHONY

Tatum has been keeping busy, and I've let him, my own schedule full with trying to neutralize the threats against us. The Aces are faltering, showing me all their hands, but it's getting dangerous the more desperate they become.

But I'm close to winning.

Now it's late, the sun having gone down. My stomach rumbles with the need to eat so I send someone to bring me dinner and check on Tatum. Last I saw, he was headed out to the gardens. I did ask a guard to follow him, so I know he's safe, but still. I want him in here with me, where I can see him, touch him, and know he's okay.

But before I can radio the guard to bring him to me, Bane comes in, looking dazed, blood trickling down his face, a bruise sitting on his temple.

"They got me," he says, his eyes unfocused.

I stand up quickly and my chest tightens. "Who got you?"

"They tricked me."

His hands fist and he presses them to his eyes. "I'm going to murder him."

"Who?" I repeat, stepping up to him and practically shaking him. "Who the fuck are you talking about?"

"Henry. I..."

My jaw locks, and I feel my neck start to crack. "Henry?"

Bane nods and then stomps his foot.

“Henry was seen speaking to someone in the back room of the club, a Fallen Ace. He can’t be trusted. Bane, what the fuck have you done...?”

“I’m sorry, Boss. I didn’t know... I may have gotten a little cum drunk...”

“Jesus,” and then my entire body tenses. “Fuck. Where’s Tatum?”

“He was outside...” I don’t listen for another second. I just run.

My shoes hit the gravel and I don’t stop moving until I come to the slumped guard near the shed, his neck slit, his body toppled over in a pile of dirt and blood. Angel’s red geraniums crushed beneath his head.

“Where the fuck is he?” I shout as a few more guards emerge, their guns drawn.

“Boss,” Luca says, appearing beside me. He bends down and picks up Tatum’s phone. It was lying on the ground, discarded.

I stare at it, my breath leaving my lungs.

“What’s his password?”

“1234.”

Luca huffs a small laugh and then taps on the screen, walking toward me and holding it up for me to see.

“Look,” he says as he presses play and I see Tatum’s beautiful face fill the screen, his smile, his voice. And then from the shadows, I see someone emerge.

“They’ve taken him. Call Sebastian. We need him helping us with this,” I say, my vision narrowing, my heart rate slowing. I’d consider Diablo, but he’s in a remote part of Wales and without his computer.

No, Sebastian can handle this. He’s the best at what he does.

My switch, the one that Tatum obliterated is back, reappearing before me and settling the chaos inside. I’m focused, deadly.

“We’ll get him back, Boss,” Luca says, and I give a clipped nod, taking Tatum’s phone and striding to my office.

“Bane, sharpen your knives,” I say as he trots nervously beside me. “But first, tell me everything you told Henry.”

## 20

TATUM

**S**omething's in my mouth, rotten and dry. I try to spit it out, but I can't move, my hands are tied behind my back. My eyelids flutter open and I'm consumed by darkness. I grunt, trying to move, but end up knocking my head against something sharp.

Goddamnit.

Blood trickles from the wound on my forehead, and I groan lowly against my mouth restraint.

Fuck.

Fuck, where am I?

Suddenly I feel the rasp of an engine starting, the crunch of tires.

I'm in the trunk of a car. I can smell the exhaust wafting up toward me, can hear the rumble of music. What the fuck is that?

I strain my ears and make out some kind of horn. Are they listening to ska?

*Jesus*, I think as I let my head thunk down on the cold metal beneath me. As the car moves forward, I'm jostled back and forth, my stomach roiling from whatever they gave me.

Shit. What did they give me?

Must have been something injected into me, a sedative. My breathing grows labored, and I try to calm myself, but it's hard to even attempt. I don't know where I am or where they're taking me.

What are they going to do to me? Being in the trunk of a car is never a good sign. Don't people usually end up dumped in a lake when they're toted around like this?

Oh my god.

How did this happen?

I try to go over the events of the night, but I come up with nothing. Anthony spared no expense on security at his house. He doubled his guards. This shouldn't have happened. And yet it did.

Somehow they got in. They found me. And now I'm here.

I could be fish food soon.

The thought causes my chest to clench and my mouth to go even drier than it already was. I hear my muffled sobs behind the rag stuffed in my mouth, and in this moment, I feel small and pathetic. A soul easily snuffed out by something evil.

I'll be leaving so much behind, so much potential.

Friends. My parents. *Anthony*.

My hands strain against the bonds and yet they don't break. They just continue to dig into my skin, chaffing my wrists until I lie there defeated. There's nothing I can do but wait.

Suddenly, the car stops and I roll forward, knocking my head once more against the sharp protrusion I can't see. I hold my breath, eyes wide when I hear the trunk pop open and light filters through. I blink against the shadowy figures leaning over me.

"Well, hello there," a dark voice says. I can hear the slither of evil, the way he hates me and yet has never even met me.

I blink up at him, never having seen him before in my life.

He has a neatly trimmed graying mustache and white hair, tattoos crawling up his neck. He looks stern and weathered, as if he's seen more than his fair share of life, and I wonder how that plays into my fate.

Who the fuck is this? I rack my brain but come up with nothing.

"Get him out. Put him in the cellar," he barks and then two meatheads grab on to me, their beefy arms hauling me up. I knock against the trunk door and cry out as pain explodes down my temples and into my neck. But they don't hesitate, even when I writhe and kick, fighting to escape even though I have nowhere to go.

I have no way to get out of here. Unless someone comes to rescue me.

He's going to come rescue me, right?

He wouldn't just leave me.

*You're mine. Mine.*

My feet drag down stone stairs and then I'm pushed forward, falling onto my knees, feeling the skin peel back beneath my jeans. I let out a small sob, trying to be brave for Anthony but failing miserably. I'm not good in an emergency. Not at all.

I hear the men laugh before the door shuts loudly and I'm left in the musty cellar. I shuffle forward, trying to figure out where I am, but it's darker here than in the trunk. I can hear the scuttling and squeaking of mice in the corners. Or fuck, maybe they're rats.

Oh my god.

Oh my fucking god.

I hate those little shits. They are small and beady-eyed with sharp little teeth. What if they bite me? What if I get rabies? I could die from that in a few years. I looked it up once.

It could happen.

I try to stand to get off the floor and manage after a few failed attempts, my legs cramping. They wobble as I take a few shuffling steps forward, wanting to see if I can find a way out. But I just run into walls and barrels of something.

I wish I could fucking see.

My eyes adjust to the darkness slightly, but still, it's just walls and wooden barrels and the occasional scurrying of creatures I can't see. I make my way up the stairs, turning around and grabbing on to the handle with my tied hands. But the door is locked so I just move back to the floor and stand there, feeling dehydrated and faint.

I want to sit, sleep, shower.

I want Anthony to come and hold me, to whisper that he'll burn the world down for me.

But he's not here.

He will be. I have to keep faith in that. He'll come for me.

He has to.

*You're mine.*

---

He doesn't come for me.

It's been hours. Days? I don't know, but everything hurts. I've taken to sitting on top of a barrel, my arms numb as they stay tied behind me. For a quick hopeful moment, I thought I could escape, that I could saw my bindings off with some kind of metal and be free, but no.

This isn't like the movies.

I'm just sitting here. Waiting.

For what, I don't know.

I can hear them above me, stomping around. But no one has come to check on me, feed me, or give me water. My throat burns and so does my stomach. I feel like throwing up and yet there's nothing there. And even if I did, I couldn't get it past this gag.

I shudder at the thought, pulling my knees into my chest to stop the shiver moving through me. Everything seems hopeless.

I've never felt this way in my life, not even at the bar when I was getting the shit kicked out of me. Because I knew he was coming for me. But now, I don't know.

I don't fucking know.

He may never find me.

I hear a hinge creak and then see a flash of light as the sound of footsteps move down the stairs.

"Get him, bring him up," a deep voice says.

Two men, different from before, grab on to me and yank my arms, making me fall to my knees once more. I grunt as they shuffle me up the steps and into the brightly lit room. My head throbs and I sway slightly, trying to take in as much as I can. But there's not much to see. It's barren, old, and dilapidated. Like an old ruin in the woods.

The one thing I do know is that it's day now. It's been at least twelve hours since my kidnapping then.

"Put him here," the man with the gray mustache and white hair says. I'm shoved onto a chair and a hand slaps me across my face.

God, that was uncalled for. I mean, really.

My eyes sting and grow wet, the pain sliding up my cheek and down my neck. I breathe deeply through my nose and blink wildly to keep my tears at bay.

After a few seconds, I finally manage to turn my gaze back up to the man and narrow my eyes.

*Fuck you, I think, trying to remain calm. I haven't managed to do it successfully yet, but I can redeem myself. I can prove that I'm strong. Stronger than they think.*

"Oh, so the little slut thinks he's brave? You think you're a big man, now?" the man says, leaning toward me and grinning wryly. "I promise you won't be. Not when I'm done with you."

I roll my eyes, and he lets out a dark laugh.

I swallow as his grimy hands grab on to my chin, forcing me to look at him. "Have some respect, boy. Do you know who I am?"

His fingernails bite into my skin, and I try and wrench my head away, but he won't let go.

"I'm Douglas Kennedy. Yours truly."

I don't know who the fuck that is, and he must know this because he grins wide. "I run the Fallen Aces. It's you I have to thank for all the closures and arrests that have been made against me, I'm sure. You've been pulling the strings."

I pull zero strings when it comes to Anthony, but for some reason, he seems to think I have that kind of power.

"You're the reason I lost twenty men in that bar up on Creek Road. But then again, you sure are pretty," he says with a dark laugh.

I try and wrench my face away once more, but he keeps it turned toward him, my jaw aching from the hold he has on me.

A flash of metal appears from his pocket and he holds a knife up to my lips. "You know, your man is called The Silencer, right? He loves to take the tongues out of people's mouths. Perhaps we could send yours home to him. Let him know what he'll be missing."

I writhe in the chair, trying to kick my legs out. But they only tie them down, rendering me unable to move.

The knife pricks the skin of my cheek, and I feel my eyes widen. They won't really cut out my tongue, right?

"He's scared. Good. Send Anthony a picture. Show him what his little pet has been up to."

I glower at him, trying to look unafraid when the flash goes off.

God, Anthony is going to lose it when he sees this. Oh fuck.

He better not get hurt because of this. Because of me. I'd rather die.

"Shit. My finger was over the lens," the man with the phone says, and Douglas groans.

“Take the picture right the first time, you piece of shit.”

“Yeah, okay, sorry. I got thick fingers. Can’t help it.”

Another flash and this time, I most likely look confused. Which I am. Apparently Douglas hasn’t employed the smartest people. Which is an advantage Anthony has over him. At least the people in his employ are smart, cunning even.

“He’s gonna be so angry,” a big man says, his head disproportionately smaller than his body. I wish I could tell him that, that he looks like a grape on top of a basketball. But I can’t. My mouth is still gagged. But if I could, I would. I’d sneer and mock him relentlessly.

“He will be. And then maybe he’ll give me what I want.”

Grape-head glances at him and asks dumbly, “And what do we want, Boss?”

Douglas sighs, putting the knife away and pinching his nose. “We want his shipping ports and we want the cocaine.”

“Yeah, that’s right. I remember now.”

Douglas’s jaw clenches and he glances down as he grabs a pair of garden shears.

“Maybe we should send Anthony a little present, something to commemorate this little get together.”

He draws closer, and closer, and then he stops directly in front of me.

“He’s not going to find you, you know that, right? I’m going to take you apart piece by piece. By the time he figures it out, there will be nothing left.”

I can’t help the fear that flares through me. Oh my god, I’m going to die. I’m going to fucking die.

“Untie his hands and tie them to the chair. Now.”

Grape-head moves slowly, lumbering toward me and doing as Douglas asks. Once more, I strain against him, trying to fight, but grape-head has something I don’t. Strength.

I squirm when the shears press into my knuckle, the ring finger on my right hand. “Please don’t do this,” I plead unintelligibly through the gag. *Please don’t.*

“Tatum, I want you to know this. You won’t be found. We’re somewhere Anthony doesn’t know about. Even his little senator and friends in the FBI have no idea this place exists.”

He presses the shears deeper into my skin, blood pooling to the surface, and I squirm harder, trying to fight, but all I do is hurt myself more.

And then he snaps his teeth, the shears opening ominously.

“I think Anthony will really enjoy this, don’t you?”

And then he grabs on to my finger, lifts it slightly, and cuts it right off.

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## 21

### ANTHONY

I t's been an entire day. One fucking day since Tatum was stolen from me.

I haven't slept. I have barely eaten. My mind is too focused on finding him, on bringing him home. I can't think of anything else. I'm consumed by it, with a rage that is boiling inside of me.

This morning they delivered his finger in a box. Bane almost shot through the wall, howling with frustration when he saw what it was.

I could have murdered him in that moment.

Stupid, stupid man. I will never let him live this down. Thankfully he's made himself scarce. I haven't seen him since he rushed out, muttering something about knives, blowtorches, and kidneys.

I have no idea what he plans to do.

And I couldn't care less. As long as he brings me Tatum back.

"Where the fuck is he!" I shout, my fists balled on my desk, my eyes flashing with frustration. "Where the fuck is he?"

"We've checked all their known properties. We have Robbie looking into it from the FBI side of things. But we just don't know," Luca says.

"That's not good enough," I hiss.

Sebastian leans against the fireplace, wearing a Mickey Mouse shirt with dark jeans, looking completely unbothered by this.

"I could help now, if you'd like."

My gaze flashes up to him. “Now? And why the hell didn’t you answer my calls earlier?”

“I was at Disneyland. I wasn’t checking my phone. Trust me. I’d rather have been here. The screams of happiness...” he shudders.

I feel my heart squeeze, and I give him a clipped nod. To be honest, I was surprised he agreed to cut his vacation short and come at all. Apparently Tatum had quite the effect on his Matty.

He has that effect on everyone.

“Fine. Please help us find him. I’ll be in your debt. Again.”

Sebastian nods and then pulls out his laptop and gets to work, his fingers flying across the screen. Along with all the other shady shit he does, no one can hack a system like Sebastian LeClerc.

I try to just sit there and wait, but I can’t fucking stand it. Patience is not my virtue at the moment.

“Luca,” I bite out and nod toward the door. He follows me outside, and I flick my wrist out. “Cigarette.”

He pulls out his pack and hands me one, pulling out his electric lighter and igniting the end.

I take a drag and feel the smoke enter my lungs.

“You may need something stronger, Boss,” he says, and I shake my head.

“I want to be clear-headed when I find out where they are. I’m going to murder them all and then burn their bodies to ash.”

Luca nods and then stares out across the gardens.

“I’ll come with you.”

“No, you’ll stay here. If something does happen to me, you need to take over.”

He hesitates and then lights up his own cigarette. “Fuck. That’s depressing as hell.”

“It’s the reality of what we do.”

“Yeah, but I don’t want this, Anthony. I never have. I’ve only stayed to be close to you. To the boys. To Laura.”

“And she’s gone. Just like Tatum.” My voice cracks, and I take another inhale.

“He’s not gone. We will find him and then we’ll kill them all.”

“He’s hurt. He’s alone...” my voice trails off, my eyes starting to sting. Luca doesn’t acknowledge it, just stares out into the distance and blows

smoke from his mouth.

“We’ll find him.”

“We have to.”

“We will.”

We finish our cigarettes, and I take a deep breath, my mind no longer wandering and lost, but focused once more. Finding Tatum.

I will find him.

Sebastian suddenly appears from the shadows and he runs his tongue along the front of his teeth, looking a bit smug. I straighten and face him, hope bubbling in my gut.

“It’s done. I just messaged you the coordinates. Would you like me to come? Matty wanted to do Disneyland fireworks tonight, but I wouldn’t mind a little murder beforehand. Really gets the blood flowing. He won’t mind waiting here for me. Anyway, he’ll be upset if Tatum dies, and I don’t like anything upsetting my sunshine.”

“Yes.” I turn to Luca. “I need twelve men, armed heavily. I’ll be ready to leave in five. And text Bane. Tell him he’s been located.”

And then Sebastian and I are striding toward the SUV, my eyes laser focused.

I’m going to bring him home and nothing will ever harm him again.

## 22

TATUM

My entire arm is on fire, snot and tears crusted to my cheeks as I set my shaky hand on my thigh. I can't look.

I can't fucking look.

After they took a part of me, they cauterized the wound. The pain of it made me pass out, the smell of it, the agony. I only woke when they threw me back downstairs. Thankfully they took the rag out of my mouth and handed me a bottle of water. At least I can move around, but right now, it hurts too much to do anything. Everything aches.

How can something so small be so painful?

I lean my head back against the wall and try to meditate, but I can't focus. It's too hard to think past it. It's a fire in my skin, my nerve endings ablaze. My legs start to shake and I pull them into my chest and lay my head on my bent knees.

I don't want to lose any more parts. I don't want to fall to pieces. What if no one wants me after this? What if Anthony doesn't?

I shouldn't be thinking these things, and yet in this dark basement, with only the shadows and mice to keep me company, I can't help it. It's the only thing that's replaying over and over in my head.

I might die.

What will he tell my parents if I don't make it? If he doesn't get to me in time?

They will be devastated.

The thought of my parents faces as he breaks the news to them makes my eyes well with tears once more. I rub my swollen eyes on the knees of my dirty jeans and sniffle.

I won't die here. I won't.

---

I don't know how I manage it, but I fall asleep. Perhaps it was sheer exhaustion or the throbbing pain lulling me to the other side, but eventually my eyes closed and I drifted off. It was the first peaceful moment I've had since being taken.

I don't want to wake up. I don't want to face what's next.

But I'm forced to.

Strong, rough hands grab on to me, yanking me up, and I startle, kicking my feet out and fighting the monster. As I come awake, groggy and disoriented, I realize that my arm is on fire once more, that my nerve endings are zinging with pain as the two meatheads haul me up the stairs.

They strap me down in the chair once more and there's Douglas looking well-fed and showered.

"I hope you fucking die, you piece of shit," I spit out as soon as I see him.

He grins at me, thinking it's funny. But I'm not deterred. This is the first time I've had my mouth free since he captured me, and I plan on using it.

"What? Looking so smug? You're pathetic. A loser. Tying me down and cutting me up. That make you feel like a real big man?"

His grin slips and he runs a hand through his hair. "Don't tempt me with cutting, boy. I'll do a whole lot worse than that."

"Yeah, yeah, you and your big knives. You're stupid. Such a loser. Probably can't even get it up, huh?"

Grape-head snorts a laugh at this, and Douglas turns to glower at him. He quickly swallows it back and then shrugs. "I mean, it was kinda funny."

"Keep your thoughts to yourself, Butch. You piece of shit. And you," he turns his gaze back to me. "Maybe I should cut out your tongue so you shut the fuck up."

The thought of it, the way that would feel makes my entire body shake with fear, but I don't let up. Yes, I'm scared but I'm also mad.

"What? You want me to beg, you ugly fuck? I won't. No, when Anthony gets to you, I'm going to tell him to let me have a go at you. Maybe you'll be the one in the chair, huh? Maybe Bane will scoop out your eyeballs."

I grin at him, knowing my lips are bloody and my voice is slightly unhinged, but the thought of doing that to him makes me giddy. I want a chance to rip him apart.

"See, that's where you're wrong. They won't ever find me. Or you. Well, unless you count the pieces of you I'll deliver to him."

"Try it, you pathetic piece of garbage."

His nostrils flare, and I see him grab his knife. Fuck. Shit. I taunted him too much, pushed him too far. He makes his way toward me, intent on doing just as I suggested. And I lean back, trying to scramble out of the way, but unable to move.

Fuck. Fuck!

But before he can lay a hand on me, I hear gunshots outside, the shouts of several men, and the thump of bodies hitting the ground.

"You are so dead," I say with an evil grin, and Douglas sputters near me, looking around wildly for a means of escape. "I'm going to enjoy watching you suffer."

Suddenly, Anthony strides in the doorway, his gaze intent, Sebastian at his side.

Grape-head tries to run past them, but Sebastian flicks his wrist and stabs him right in the neck without so much as blinking.

Douglas scurries behind me, the knife in his hand pressed against my neck.

Anthony's gaze darkens, he's murderous. I've never seen him like this.

For the first time since meeting him, I see the mafia boss in him. Ruthless, evil.

So fucking hot.

"You are going to die, Douglas," Anthony growls. "But perhaps I'll make it slightly less painful if you back away from him."

Douglas scoffs and digs the knife in further, making my skin tear and bleed.

I hear Bane outside, howling, an evil laugh following as gunshots continue to ring out.

Sebastian nods and turns, striding out of the rickety building. His job is done and as he goes, my eyes meet Anthony's.

He doesn't move, doesn't breathe. And then I feel it, the whoosh of something behind me, the gurgle of someone straining against hands to breathe.

"Took you long enough," Anthony says, moving toward me quickly.

Sebastian chuckles. "I knew you'd want him alive," he says as Anthony bends down in front of me, his own knife pulled from his coat. The sharp blade cuts through the rope and I fall into his arms, glancing back to see that Douglas is passed out, still breathing and alive.

Anthony's arms go around me and he pulls me into his chest, his face pressed into my neck, inhaling.

"I'm so sorry, Tatum," he whispers, his voice choked.

"It's not your fault."

"It is."

I hold on to him tightly and then hiss when I remember I'm missing a finger.

"It hurts," I whisper, and Anthony's grip tightens on me.

"We'll get you home. We'll get you patched up."

"I'm ugly now."

He leans back and his eyes meet mine. "You have never been more beautiful, my little light. Never. You were so brave."

My lips wobble and a tear slips from my eye.

He swipes it gently away with his thumb and then picks me up and carries me toward the car.

"Guess I'll bring this arsehole by myself," Sebastian grumbles loudly behind us, but Anthony just ignores him. His gaze is on me.

Only me.

He came. He found me.

I'm safe.

## 23

### ANTHONY

I watch him sleep after the meds kicked in, the stub on his hand stitched and bandaged. He's on a heavy dose of antibiotics and pain meds to get him through the worst of it.

The longer I sit here, the more rage builds.

It's an inferno inside of me.

They'll pay. They'll fucking pay.

The door to my bedroom opens, and Bane walks through, wearing a new necklace. I glance at it and see Tatum's finger inside a glass vial. He turns it in his hand as he makes his way to the bed.

"He looks peaceful," Bane says, his voice low so as not to wake him.

"He's happy to be home."

Bane nods and my eyes go to that damn necklace. What the fuck was he thinking? Then again, with Bane, I never fucking know.

"Please don't make me take it off. It's a reminder," he explains. "A reminder that I fucked up. I won't do it again. I've learned my lesson."

I nod, just once and then glance over at the open door leading to the hidden passage.

"They're all there, Boss. Waiting for you."

"Henry?"

His brow furrows and he scowls. "Can't find him. The little goblin. But trust me, when I do find him..." Something evil glints in his eyes.

I nod again and then make my way into the passageway, following him through the tunnels.

“Bane, you know that I’ll have to punish you for this.”

He sighs. “Yeah. I’m ready for something to be cut off. Just tell me what.”

“I’m not cutting anything off you. But I will be confiscating your collection. For a time.”

He spins around and gasps. “Boss. What—that...that’s not right.” I don’t respond, and his shoulders sag in the dim light. “I’d have rather lost a leg.”

He pouts the entire way to the room where Douglas is held. He’s slumped over in a chair, one of his fingers already missing. I hear the screams of everyone else we brought back, anyone who dared to help aid in Tatum’s capture and torture. They’re wishing they were dead right now.

But like Bane said, we’re going to make this last. They’re all going to suffer.

Bane shuffles up next to me and pulls something out of his pocket. A finger in a glass vial, almost identical to the one around his neck. “Douglas’s. It’s for Tatum.”

I give a clipped nod and then turn my gaze back to the man of the hour. The man I’m going to pull apart piece by piece.

“Bane, I’d like to handle Douglas. How long do you think I can drag this out for?”

“A few days?” he says as he wheels a cart in front of me. I see tools there. Sharp ones, blunt ones, electric ones.

“Good,” I say as I pick up a blunt, rusty knife. “I’m going to make this last.”

As I say those words, Douglas looks up and fear sparks in his eyes, the smell of piss meeting my nose as I make my way over to him.

I crouch down and dig the tip of the knife into the bloody stub of his finger. He cries out behind the gag in his mouth, and I grin.

“You’re mine, you piece of shit. And you will wish for death.”

“I’ll make sure you think of him every time I remove a part of you,” I add as I grab his middle finger and slowly saw it off. I make sure it’s slow and painful. His eyes roll back in his head as his body trembles.

Good. I want him to feel it all. Every slice. Every bit of him torn apart.

Bane pulls up a chair behind me, and I hear the crunch of a bag open as he starts to snack.

I don't even look back at him, just slowly remove the rest of Douglas's fingers on each hand, making sure to say Tatum's name each time. He touched what is mine. He hurt him.

"You shouldn't have done that," I say as I toss the fingers into a jar. One by one. When it's full and Douglas's hands are just stumps, Bane eagerly swoops them up and puts the lid on, cradling it to his chest.

"Can I keep these, Boss?" he asks, and I just stand up, wiping my bloody knife on Douglas's shoulder, smearing the blood into his shirt. He's already making a mess everywhere.

But I do need to give him a small rest so that I can move on to other things.

Like his eyes and tongue.

"You can. For now."

Bane giggles as he holds out a chip bag to me. "Want one?"

I stare at my bloody hands and shake my head.

"No, but I'll be back. In a few hours."

Douglas is passed out now and Bane sighs. "I could work a little on him while you're gone."

I shake my head again and give him a stern look. "No. This one is mine. All mine."

He sighs and then leans forward. "But I can keep his bits, right? Like all the pieces when he's all disassembled?"

Yes, Bane. Yes, you can.

---

Tatum wakes up slowly, looking a bit groggy when he does. I've showered since slicing up Douglas and now all I want to do is hold him for a while.

I never want him out of my sight again.

"Hey, you," he says as he nuzzles into my bare chest.

My fingers thread through his hair, and I inhale him. He smells fresh and clean, like the Tatum I know.

I kiss him gently, my lips meeting his softly, wanting him with a ferocity that I didn't know I possessed, and yet not wanting to push him too

far too fast. He just came out of something traumatic and I don't want him to do anything he's not ready for.

I'll wait an eternity for him.

But Tatum continues to kiss me, groaning into my mouth, growing more frantic, his body melting into mine.

"I want you," he gasps. "I want you so bad. Please, Anthony. Please."

I smooth my hand down his spine and then roll him onto his back, capturing his mouth once more. His legs wind around me, and he sighs against my lips.

"I'm so glad to be home," he says as he arches up into me. "I didn't know if I was going to see you again."

"You're here. You're safe," I say as I meet his frantic thrusts. My lips trail down his jaw and neck, pushing his shirt up and nipping lightly at his exposed skin. I suck on his nipples and trace my way down to his belly button with my tongue. When I get to his boxers, I tug them off and toss them aside. Tatum's hand threads through my hair as I run my nose up his dick, feeling it twitch against me.

My mouth drags up it, kissing the hard length gently. This isn't about me tonight. This is about him.

I want him to feel how much I want him, how much I need him.

I don't even know if this is love. It goes beyond that.

This is obsession, feral and deep. I need him more than I need to breathe.

My mouth surrounds his cockhead and I suck on it, letting it sit on my tongue, my eyes meeting Tatum's as he gasps above me. His good hand tightens on me, digging into my scalp as I suck him down, taking him as far as I can go before he hits the back of my throat. I swallow around his length before pulling off and doing it all over again, an endless loop until he's chanting my name.

"Anthony—wait. I—" His voice cracks as he yanks on my hair, but I hollow out my cheeks, making sure that he can't pull me off, and I feel his legs tremble, his back arching off the bed as his cock erupts in my mouth. I taste him for a moment before swallowing it, licking my lips and moving up to lie at his side, brushing kisses up his neck and jaw.

"That was...oh my god, I'm so glad I'm alive."

"Me too, my little light. Me too."

He snuggles up to me, and I take his hand in mine, kissing the bandaged bit as gently as I can.

“I want you to know that I have him. Below,” I say, and Tatum wiggles against me, his eyes meeting mine.

“Are you making him hurt?” he asks, and I nod, kissing the tip of his nose.

“He is praying for death. But I won’t let him.”

“And why’s that?”

“Because he touched what is mine. He hurt you. He won’t live through it but he will suffer greatly first.”

“How long will you keep him alive?”

“A few days.” His leg rests over mine, and he nuzzles against my chest.

“If I want to, can I have a go at him?”

My heart thumps in my chest and lust flares through me.

“Whatever you want.”

“I’ll think on it.”

“You take all the time you need.”

Just as I say that there’s a knock on the door. I sigh, pulling the sheets over Tatum and pulling us both up so we’re sitting against the headboard.

“Come in.”

Teddy peers through the opening, and when he sees we’re decent he strides in.

He’s wearing sweatpants and a white t-shirt, which is out of character for him, but he’s still healing from his gunshot wound.

He wanders up to the bed, and I can see his cheeks flaming. With a down-turned stare, he pulls a bouquet of flowers from behind his back and hands them to Tatum.

Tatum gasps and reaches for them, placing his nose right inside the colorful arrangement and grinning.

“This is so nice, Teddy. Thank you.”

He beams up at him, and Teddy’s cheeks flush darker. Something ugly wells up within me, but I tamp it down. Somehow, Tatum’s managed to wriggle himself into everyone’s hearts. It’s not his fault they all want him, that they’re all overly protective.

This is good. It means more are willing to die for him.

“Anthony, can Teddy join us for a bit?”

I stare at him, my eye twitching. I know it's platonic, but good fuck, I don't want to share right now. I just got him back. But then again, I always want him happy.

"Are you serious?"

"I am."

Really, who am I to deny him anything? So a minute later, I'm seated near the edge of the mattress, Tatum resting his head against Teddy's chest as he lounges in bed next to us.

I don't share him. I won't. But it seems I have to, in a way.

Later that evening, we finally get up and moving. Teddy leaves us after a while and wanders off to do whatever he's been doing while healing. Probably sitting with the guards in the front and watching for any break-ins. He blames himself for not being present with Tatum that night. I don't think he will ever forgive himself.

Not that he's said it. But I can see it in the way he moves, in the way he watches over Tatum.

He adores him, in his own way.

I bring Tatum to the front porch and settle him against me, and when that's not close enough, I pull him into my lap and press my hands to the warm skin of his stomach.

"Have you heard from Angel?" he asks after a moment of silence.

"Yes. He's messaged me, and Casey has assured me he's fine."

Tatum wiggles on my lap, leaning his head back against my shoulder. "I'm going to try calling him again."

"Go ahead."

He pulls his phone out and hits the call button, our faces appearing on the screen as we wait for him to answer.

"I don't think he's going to—" he begins, only to be cut off when my son's face appears before us.

There's a wobbly smile and then a sniffle. "Hi, you two," Angelo says, his eyes glittering. He swipes at them quickly, and Tatum frowns.

"Hey, are you okay?"

"Oh yes, just a bit homesick, but I'm fine. Really."

Tatum leans forward and purses his lips. "You can tell us, Angel."

"I really am fine. It's so beautiful here. The kinds of flowers that can grow in this environment is wonderful. And Mikhail has a large greenhouse that's just for me."

“Really?”

“Yes, really. It’s lovely here.”

“We can come visit, right?” Tatum says, and then glances back at me.

“Once you’re recovered,” I reply.

Angelo’s brow furrows. “Recovered from what?”

Tatum sighs and then waves his hand at the camera. Angelo audibly gasps.

“What is that? What happened?”

“I was kidnapped and they...well, they stole a piece of me.”

Angelo’s eyes are wide and his cheeks flushed. “I hope my dad found them. And has ripped them to pieces.”

“Currently in the process,” I say, and Angelo nods. He’s never been one for blood, unlike Diablo. But he is my son in many other ways, especially when it comes to justice for those who have wronged us.

“Good,” he says and then sighs. “I really do miss you all.”

“We will plan a trip. I promise. I want to see how you’re doing,” Tatum says.

Angelo nods and they carry on a conversation for a short while, discussing the mundane things of life, like what he’s been doing with his free time and how he’s handling married life. But something seems off. He lacks the normal shine in his eyes.

As soon as we hang up, Tatum turns toward me and frowns. “Something’s not right.”

“I know. I could see it in his eyes. I’ll have Casey keep me posted. And we will visit in a few weeks.”

“Good. I want to hug him.”

I do too, but right now I’m content hugging Tatum to me, feeling him breathe as I cradle him in my palms.

“I don’t know, Anthony. I still think Angel marrying Mikhail was the wrong decision. If it is, can you break the contract?”

I nuzzle up into him, biting down on his ear gently. “If that’s what Angel wants, then yes we can, but it comes with complications. Our businesses are becoming enmeshed at the moment. But of course, if he’s miserable, I will make arrangements. But he wanted this. He told me he did.”

Tatum doesn’t respond, just turns in my lap and straddles my legs, his hands going into my hair. His mouth grazes mine and he bites down softly

on my bottom lip. My dick twitches between my legs and I pull him closer, our cocks brushing when I do.

“I want you to fuck me. Right out here.”

“Do you have lube?” I ask, and he nods, pulling out a small container and grinning slyly at me.

“I’m always prepared.”

“Good boy.”

“I like it when you call me that,” he says as he pushes off of me and shimmies out of his pants. I work my own open, my dick already hard and ready. “But you know what I really like?” he asks as he leans forward and works himself open. “I like it when you call me your little light.”

“You are my little light.”

“I am,” he says with a sigh, leaning toward me and kissing me, his fingers still inside of him. My hand wraps around his cock, and he groans against me.

“You are my little light in the darkness.”

He groans louder and then clammers on top of me and settles my dick right at his wet hole. “That is so romantic, Anthony,” he sighs as he sits down on me. My hands clasp his hips as he takes me all the way inside. “It seems you may love me.”

Our eyes meet and my thumbs draw small circles across his skin.

“It’s more than love. It’s so much more.”

He nods and then rocks against me, the two of us hurling over the edge at the same time, our bodies pressed together, our hearts beating in time.

## 24

TATUM

I t's not until the next morning that I decide I want to see Douglas. I've decided I want a turn at him. I'm irrationally angry.

"Are you sure?" Anthony asks, and I nod, rubbing my good hand across my stomach.

"What's left of him?"

"Too much."

I nod and swallow. "Okay. Yes. I want to see him."

"You have to be sure. Once you see it, you can't go back in time and unsee it."

"I know," I whisper and then nod resolutely. "I want to."

Anthony leans down and kisses me swiftly before striding toward the hidden door in his office.

"Alright. Come on. Bane has been waiting for you anyways. He has a gift for you."

"He does?" I ask, leaning against Anthony as he walks me down the tunnel.

"Yes, but I told him to wait until you were ready to see him."

"I heard he's the one who leaked everything."

"He did," Anthony grinds out, obviously still furious about it.

"We can't blame him forever, Anthony. He didn't do it on purpose. He'd never hurt me."

“Yes, but it was reckless, careless, and you suffered for it. So now, he will too.”

I stop moving and turn to look up at him. “What did you do?”

His nostrils flare. “I took away his collection. Only temporarily, but something had to be done.”

“Anthony,” I say, my voice low and with warning. “That’s abnormally cruel. He loves his collection.”

“I know, which is exactly why I’ve taken it away.”

“You give it back. Give it back, please.”

Anthony’s eye twitches. “Fine.”

“Thank you,” I whisper and lean up and kiss him deeply. His hands clutch onto me, pulling me into his strong body. God, the way his cock felt earlier, stretching me.

I still feel the sting of it. It takes away from the dull throb in my finger.

It’s getting better, but it still aches and I feel the absence of it. It’s weird that sometimes I can feel it as if it’s still there.

Such an odd thing.

“You ready?” Anthony asks as we make our way toward Bane’s work room.

I nod, swallowing roughly.

I can smell it, the scent of decay and death. It’s no longer the smell of bleach like it was when I came down here with Bane that one time. Now it reeks of the copper scent of blood. I breathe through my mouth instead of my nose as we round the corner, and I see Bane leaning against the wall, listening to something in his earphones and munching on some candy.

As soon as his eyes latch onto me, he gasps and throws himself at me, pulling me into him and squeezing me so tightly I almost can’t breathe.

“You’re alive. Oh fuck, I’m so glad to see you, little snack. I made you something,” he says as he pulls away and meets my gaze.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” he runs to his right and disappears through an opening before returning with something in his hand.

“I made it just for you.”

He places it gently in my upturned palm, and I glance down and gasp when I see the finger floating in a glass vial.

“It’s his. I took it. Just for you.”

My eyes grow wet, and I fling myself at him, pressing a kiss to his cheek. “Thank you. This is so thoughtful.”

A blush bleeds across his cheeks and down his neck.

“Would you like me to put it on?”

“Okay,” I say as I turn around and let him clasp it behind my neck. As I do, I see Anthony’s lips twitching, his hands skimming along my sides, owning me even in this moment.

When I finally spin back around, I see Bane grinning at me crookedly.

“I have a matching one.”

He holds out the vial around his neck, and my eyes go to the finger sitting there.

“Oh. Is that mine?”

“For fuck’s sake, Bane,” Anthony grumbles.

Bane nods and then blinks down at me. “Is this okay?”

He looks shy and uncomfortable, and I hate it.

“Of course it is. Take care of it.”

He sighs in relief. “I will. I promise. Now, are you here because of Douglas?”

“Yes,” I say, suddenly nervous once more.

“Oh, goodie. Yes. Well, he’s still alive. Barely, but if you want a go at him, there’s still plenty left. I’d say ears and eyelids. Maybe even eyeballs. Anthony already got his tongue.”

I squeeze Bane once more and then let Anthony take hold of me and direct me forward.

I’m honestly not prepared for what I see.

Douglas is sitting tied to a chair, his body a bloody heap. He’s missing all his fingers and all his toes. Patches of skin hang from him and his head is missing bits of his scalp.

“Jesus, Anthony,” I breathe, and his fingers flex against me.

“I told you it was...a lot.”

“It is.”

“Do you want to go? You don’t have to stay.”

I turn into him and breathe in his scent. It overpowers the smell of decay. “Did you do all of this because of me?”

“I told you,” he says softly, his hands sliding through my hair. “I’d burn the world down for you.”

I sigh and then peek out and see Douglas, his chin touching his chest, his body broken beyond repair.

“What are you going to do next?” I ask, and Anthony holds me against him, giving me strength.

“Whatever else until he finally dies.”

“So...”

Bane pipes up. “I mean, I’d love to scoop out his eyes.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

I lean into Anthony, suddenly not able to do it. I wanted to make him suffer like I did, but seeing him, broken and taken apart, I no longer want it. They did enough.

“I want to end it,” I say softly, and Bane groans.

“Oh, come on, little snack. End it? There’s so much left to do.”

I nod and then peer up at Anthony. “I want to end it.”

“If that’s what you want.”

“It is.”

We look at one another and he hands me a knife.

“Will you show me what to do?”

Anthony nods and leads me forward, his hand never leaving mine, his body bracketing my back.

We step up to Douglas Kennedy, the man who hurt me, who tortured me, who tried to break me. I hear his rasping, wheezing breaths. He doesn’t have much longer. I’m putting him out of his misery.

Anthony grasps onto my hand and guides the point to his neck.

“Right here, Tatum.”

He never wavers, just guides me with a flick of his wrist. I feel the blade pierce the flesh, and then I see the blood pour out of the wound. Douglas is left gasping, his body trembling slightly and then...nothing.

His body is slumped in the chair, my hand still clutching the end of the knife that is wedged into his neck.

“Come on, let me wash your hands,” Anthony says as Bane scuttles over and grabs a tool.

“Is he mine now, Boss?”

“Whatever you want, Bane,” Anthony replies and leads me from the room. He guides me back to a small washroom and helps me wash the

blood from my skin. I watch it swirl down the drain, letting my bitterness and fear leave with it.

It's done.

Nothing can hurt me again.

"Am I safe now?" I ask as he dries my hands.

"You are, Little Light. You're safe with me."

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## EPILOGUE

### ANTHONY

“**M**om, I’m fine. Really,” Tatum says, wiggling in her arms as she tries to look at his missing finger once more. She hasn’t been able to stop gawking at it.

*“You should be much more careful when pruning bushes. I taught you better than that.”*

It’s been a couple weeks since the ordeal and they’ve finally come for a visit, just in time for his graduation. Tatum told both of his parents that he was gardening and accidentally snipped his finger off with some shears.

“It’s not a lie,” he told me. “They did use shears.”

It made me see red all over again.

Luckily, Tatum calmed me down by sitting on my dick and helping me forget about all of it. He has a way with his ass, and his mouth.

Fuck, anything about him, really. He does it for me.

“Well, you need to really promise to be more careful,” his mom, Barbara, says and then looks at me, pointing her finger at me. “You better keep a better eye on him. My Tater-Tot is special.”

I chuckle as his dad, Ralph, comes up behind me and claps me on the back. “Don’t worry about her. She likes to seem threatening, but she wouldn’t hurt a fly. She just looks like a serial killer sometimes. Those eyes when people mess with her kid...”

“I’m not worried,” I reply and then shake his hand.

Tatum has wonderful parents. He's lucky to have found such lovely people. I'm relieved. Because if they'd been rotten, I'd have to murder them.

Things work out so much better when that doesn't happen.

"Alright, well we better go so we can get back in time for bingo."

Tatum grins at his mom and pecks a kiss to her cheek before squeezing his dad tightly. Just as they part, Agatha appears, handing them a cooler full of food.

"So you don't get hungry on the road," she says.

Barbara gasps and hugs Agatha tightly, having already formed a fast friendship with her and Teddy. They bonded over baking, and I can tell that Tatum's mom has a soft spot for Teddy already.

I wouldn't be surprised if she got his phone number and checks up on him regularly, just like a mother should.

As we make our way out to their car, Bane appears, jogging up from the garden, apparently having made his way out of the sheds.

"Wait! I have something for you, Barb!" Bane says as he bounds up to us.

He holds out a small velvet bag, and I find myself holding my breath. If he ends up handing her something like an eyeball I will have to speak sternly to him. So far, his parents think I'm just a wealthy businessman. They have no idea of my connections or what is buried beneath them.

"What is this?" Barbara asks as she opens the bag and pulls out a heart-shaped necklace. She oohs and aahs over it as she holds it up to the light, and I see a red liquid swirl around in the pendant.

That little shit.

"I love it," she beams.

"I knew you would," Bane says and then blushes when she presses a kiss to his cheek.

"Now, I'm serious. I'm coming back again soon, and I'm going to make you all my famous Sunday dinner."

"You're welcome anytime," I say, and Tatum leans into me, his face nuzzling into my chest. "And I'll pay for your plane tickets if that would be easier."

"Nonsense. It's just a short drive down here. And on the way home, we're going to stop and go wine tasting."

She holds out the necklace to Bane, and he helps her put it on. And then with one last round of hugs, they leave.

As we watch their car drive away, I turn to Bane.

“And what was in that necklace?”

“Douglas’s blood.”

I sigh, and Tatum grins.

Well, at least he’s not upset about it. His life will be pain-free for the rest of time. I plan on it.

“What are you up to for the rest of the day?” Tatum asks, and I glance down at him, gently touching his cheek.

“I have a meeting after lunch,” I tell him. “I’m not to be disturbed.”

He rolls his eyes and smirks. “I do what I want, you know this.”

“You do, but this time, I’m serious.”

He sighs and then nuzzles into me.

“Okay, maybe I’ll listen. But really, thanks for this week. It was so nice, especially the graduation dinner. It was almost too much.”

“Nothing is too much for you.”

“I know. I’m just so happy my parents are happy for me and that they like you.”

“Me too, Little Light. Do I make you happy?”

His eyes soften and he nods. “Of course you do.”

I lean down and kiss him senseless.

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I hear him before I see him, a rustling outside my office door.

Teddy sighs when Tatum struts in, interrupting my meeting with several men in my employ, including Viktor and Luca, who have been shooting daggers at one another the entire time. Well, more like Viktor is shooting daggers while Luca chain-smokes.

“I told you, Tatum. Not to be disturbed.”

“Yes, and that was about five hours ago. It’s time for them to go.”

The men chuckle, and I stare at him, my little light in his ivory robe, his legs showing far too much skin as he makes his way up to me. I want to grab hold of him and settle him between my legs.

“I’m serious, Anthony.” He leans down slightly and then whispers in my ear. “I’m wet and ready for you. I need you. Now. You’ve made me wait far too long.”

I feel my cock thicken, and I glance over at my colleagues, all of them drinking, smoking, and chatting. I could slip away, but then again, we have things to discuss. Like the recent acquisition of the Fallen Aces by Douglas’s cousin, Kit.

He wants to smooth things over, wants to stay in his lane. Which is fine with me. Their operation is under scrutiny by government officials at the moment, and I hope it stays that way. I don’t want more trouble.

I want to just enjoy the rest of my days with Tatum.

I want to spend my days buried inside of his tight body.

“You can wait a few more hours.”

He huffs. “I cannot wait, Anthony. I am ready. Now.”

“Why the sudden urgency?”

“I went to the dark room and saw the pictures you took of me,” he says softly, and my chest constricts. I haven’t used that room in decades, but recently, I’ve been more motivated, felt the rush of it once more.

It helped that all the pictures were of Tatum getting fucked by me.

“It really turned me on,” he adds as he slowly brings my hand up to his ass, and I slide it between his crease, feeling the lube he’s placed there. My finger sinks inside of him and he gasps, leaning forward slightly and grabbing on to the chair.

“Oh my god,” he rasps, and I grin as I push all the way inside, letting my knuckle bottom out inside of him.

“I guess we’ll have to rectify that now then, hm?”

I don’t even look at anyone else, just watch him as his lips part and he bites back a groan.

“If you want it so bad, you can sit on my dick.”

His eyes slam into mine. “You can’t be serious.”

“Deadly.”

He gasps when I twist my wrist and find his prostate, pressing against it and making him whine.

My dick is fully hard now, ready to be consumed by him, engulfed. I pull my finger from him and undo my pants. As the zipper is pulled down, some of my colleagues glance over at us. But none of them look for long.

None of them dare to. Not if they want to keep their eyes.

I spin Tatum around, bringing him between my legs, and ruck up his robe. It bunches at his thighs and his ass makes an appearance. My hands grab on to the lush globes, and I guide his hole to my cock.

He groans as he sinks down onto it, taking the entire length as he goes. My hands flex on his hips, clutching him tightly as he settles against me, his ass meeting my thighs.

He leans back and my hands sneak under his robe and snake across his skin. My fingers wrap around his hard cock, and he groans as I kiss my way up his neck.

“You really couldn’t wait, could you?”

“No, I needed you. Been thinking about you all day,” he whispers as he shifts slightly, his hole flexing against me.

I huff and then lift him up slightly, fucking him onto me.

“If you want it so badly, you can earn it.”

He whines as he leans forward slightly and uses the arms of the chair to help him ride me. I can see some eyes on us, Viktor doing his best to look away, and Luca who is smirking. But I don’t give a fuck what anyone thinks. If Tatum needs me now, he can have me.

I arch my hips up over and over again, filling him, taking him. He groans, trying to bite back the noises he’s making, but he’s not successful. Everyone can hear him, can hear what I’m doing to that ass.

“More,” he moans as my fist continues to slide up and down his cock. He’s leaking, panting, and I can feel myself drawing close, faster than expected.

He does something to me, something feral. The way he lets me possess him.

I slam up into him, and he cries out, holding on for dear life as I fuck him.

I feel the spurt of his cum as he unloads against my hand under the robe, spilling onto the floor, and as his ass clenches around my dick, I release into him, pumping him full.

He shakes, sagging against me, the robe hiding his body from everyone, but the smell of cum is in the air. They know we both finished.

“Kind of fast, Boss,” Luca says as he exhales a string of smoke.

“I’ll change the rules, Luca, about smoking in here if you don’t shut the fuck up.”

Everyone lets out a nervous chuckle, but Luca just meets my stare and winks.

Asshole.

And then he mouths, *I'm happy for you.*

Yeah. Me too. I'm so fucking happy.

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Thank you Lark Taylor for letting me borrow Matty and Sebastian and letting them be a part of my world. They were so fun to write. [If you'd like to see more of Matty and Sebastian, you can find their story here.](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cora Rose loves any kind of romance and consumes way too many books each year. She currently lives in the U.S. and spends her days daydreaming about the characters inside her head.



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